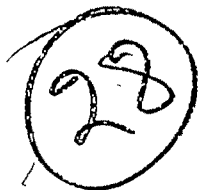


Vol. XXVI

No. 1

1998-99

Cut - H04412 - 28 - 0135719



**JOURNAL
OF
THE DEPARTMENT
OF
ENGLISH**



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

**JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA**

Advisory Board

Bhabatosh Chatterjee, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.
Ramendra Kumar Sen, M.A., D.Litt.

Board of Editors

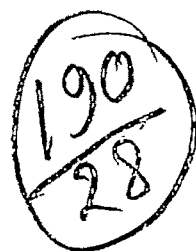
Krishna Sen, M.A. (Cal. et Kent), Ph.D.
(*Head of the Department of English*)

Dipendu Chakraborty, M.A.
Surabhi Banerjee, M.A. (Cal. et Leeds), Ph.D.
Debnarayan Banerjee, M.A., Ph.D.
Aninda Basu Ray, M.A., M.Phil.
Chidananda Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D.
Debiprasad Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D.
Ramkrishna Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D.
Kaberi Chatterjee, M.A., M.Phil.
Nandini Das, M.A., Ph.D.
Sanjukta Dasgupta, M.A., Ph.D.
Tapati Gupta, M.A., Ph.D.
Sudeshna Khasnobis, M.A. (Cantab.), Ph.D.
Santanu Majumdar, M.A., Ph.D.
Tirthaprasad Mukherjee, M.A.
Srobona Munshi, M.A., M.Litt. (Oxon.)
Mallika Ghosh Sarbadhikari, M.A.
Mangala Gouri Chakraborty, M.A.
Sona Roy, M.A., Ph.D.
Jharna Sanyal, M.A., Ph.D.
Bhupendranath Seal, M.A., Ph.D.
Kajal Sengupta, M.A. (Cal. et Oxon.)
Subhadra Kumar Sen, M.A., Ph.D.
Amitabha Sinha, M.A., Ph.D.
Secretary, U.C.A.C.

Vol. XXVI

No. 1

1998-99



***JOURNAL
OF
THE DEPARTMENT
OF
ENGLISH***



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

CONTENTS

King Lear : The Implications of the Awareness of Time <i>Bhupendranath Seal</i>	1 – 5
Aristotle's Attitude Towards Euripides : A Study <i>Ramkrishna Bhattacharya</i>	7 – 13
Rape of Spain : Ernest Hemingway's Ideology <i>Sanjukta Dasgupta</i>	15 – 24
Traveller Extraordinary <i>Jayati Gupta</i>	25 – 36
The Real House of Usher <i>Nandana Dutta</i>	37 – 48
A Protest and a Quest : A Study of Shaw's Political Vision in <i>The Apple Cart</i> <i>Goutam Sengupta</i>	49 – 60
Culture, a Countervailing Barbarism in <i>Titus Andronicus</i> <i>Aparna Khastgir</i>	61 – 78
The Terms of Cultural Criticism <i>Shelley Walia</i>	79 – 82
Anita Desai's Novels : A Study in Verbal Pattern and Psyche <i>Kunjibala Goel</i>	83 – 87
Personification of Concepts in Augustan Poetry : A Plea for Rethinking <i>Tapan Raychaudhuri</i>	89 – 104

KING LEAR : THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE AWARENESS OF TIME

Bhupendranath Seal

KING LEAR is a play of multitudinous dimensions in time. Here Shakespeare's vision is stretched out to the past, to the present, to the future and to time eternal. There are frequent juxtapositions of the present and the past and the present and the future. There are hints of the awful future that casts its shadow on the present. In the presentation of a particular period of time, Shakespeare also asserts the timeless, the eternal.

At the beginning Lear appears to be very time-conscious. His plan to divide the kingdom is based on the idea that time is leading him to old age and death. He tells his daughters :

Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths; while we
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. (I.i.36)

Lear makes a fatal mistake by asking for his daughters' expressions of love for him and brings his ruin by considering their expressions as the basis of his judgement. Goneril and Regan flatter the King in strong terms. But Cordelia's reasoned speech is only an avowal of truth. Her speech is regulated by her thoughts of her future - the time when she will wed. The future guides her actions of the present. She thinks not only what she is but also what she would be. The future is as real to her as her present. Cordelia tells her father :

Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all. (I.i.102)

Lear rises to fury in frenzied anger against Cordelia. In disclaiming her he harks back to ancient times and swears by the Druidical gods and goddesses :

Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower :
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs

From whom we do exist and cease to be,
 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
 Propinquity and property of blood,
 And as a stranger to my heart and me
 Hold thee from this for ever. (I. i. 107)

Lear's act of the disclaiming Cordelia also illustrates the severing of the bond of time. In wrath he considers Cordelia as his 'sometime daughter'. He also prefers a denial of the past event of Cordelia's birth :

Better thou
 Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better.
 (Li.233)

Her sisters' declarations of their love for her father were insincere. So while bidding farewell to her sisters Cordelia utters the truth that time shall reveal their hypocrisy :

Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides;
 Who covers faults, at last with shame derides. (I. i. 279)

The words of Gloucester comprehend the nature of the coming events of the play. He tells Edmund of the business of the day :

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us :
 though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet
 Nature finds itself scourg'd by the Sequent effects. Love cools,
 friendship falls off, brothers divide : in cities, mutinies ; in
 countries, discord ; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt
 son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction ;
 there's son against father : the King falls from bias of nature ;
 there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time :
 Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders
 follow us disquietly to our graves. (I. i.100)

Shakespeare's reference to time (the late eclipses of the sun) offers explanations of human sufferings and disastrous happenings which follow the late eclipses. As a natural corollary of these beliefs we have the sufferings of both Lear and Gloucester. Time shall not be good for both for them. Lear was hot-headed even in the best of his time and now choleric years have made him unruly and wayward. This is Goneril's diagnosis of her aged father. From a kingly past he falls now on the most ignominious present in which he becomes a moving spectacle of suffering. The present brings him to chaos. Lear's sufferings multiply as he refuses to accept the present and thinks of living in the past. He still believes that he is a king. He is humiliated and robbed of his former train. The time-conscious Fool tells

him : 'I am better than thou art now'. While trying to outjest the King's heart-struck injuries, the Fool makes a prophecy in which he suppresses his sorrow for the King's misery. He foresees a confusion in the state and says jokingly that a day will come with nobles inventing fashion for the tailors, suitors burnt at the stake and pick-pockets disappearing from the crowd. Such a state will make life hard and hazardous. One who lives on will see such a life. But the Fool belongs to earlier times.

The pangs of filial ingratitude rend Lear's soul. Reproached by Goneril, he curses her by stretching his vision to the future :

Hear, Nature, hear! dear Goddess, hear!
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful!
Into her womb convey sterility!
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen, that it may live
And be a thwart disnatur' torment to her!
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child! (I.iv.273)

Forsaken by Regan, Lear goes out in the storm on the wild unprotected heath. He feels the terrible impact of the present upon himself. In intense agony he breaks out to Kent : 'I am a man/More sinn'd against than sinning' (III.ii.59). Present grief gives him a new vision of life which enables him to see Cordelia as 'a soul in bliss'. Lear feels that the present is the most opportune moment for the gods to find out their enemies. Standing on the unprotected heath in the storm he is able to feel for the poor naked wretches wherever they are. Lear's suffering reaches its climax when the consciousness of the wrong done to Cordelia pinches him sharp. Both inner and physical sufferings have been summed up in one single verb "am". He confesses to Cordelia :

You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave ;
Thou art a soul in bliss ; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead. (IV.vii.45)

A strong sense of the present darkens the vision of Albany. In the most monstrous and unmastered acts of Goneril and Regan he sees the ominous signs of men's destruction by the species. He foresees a horrible time of cannibalism :

Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?
 A father, and a gracious aged man,
 Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,
 Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.
 Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
 A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
 If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
 Send quickly down to tame these vild offences,
 It will come,
 Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
 Like monsters of the deep. (IV. ii.40)

Thus the awful present indicates a much more awful future. The present suffering of Gloucester turns his vision to the mythical past. For his services to Lear, Gloucester is captured and blinded by Cornwall. To avenge the barbarity done to Lear and to himself, he desires that winged vengeance (Jove's arrows) should overtake Regan and Cornwall. That is obviously an instance of the axiom that time is a great avenger. The whirligig of time does not only reveal the hypocrisy of Goneril and Regan. It also performs its own justice by bringing about their ruin. Edmund is mortally wounded by Edgar in a fight. Regan, attracted to Edmund, is poisoned by Goneril. Goneril commits suicide as her intrigue with Edmund is exposed.

In Act V, scene iii, the past-present opposition, which is shown after the death of Cordelia, is an effective dramatic device. The only hope of Lear now rests on the future when he will sing and live with Cordelia. But Cordelia's death crushes his hope. Now he desires an emphatic negation of the past - the event of the death of Cordelia. He cries out in a mood of everlasting enquiry :

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
 And thou no breath at all? (V. iii. 305)

The death of Cordelia adds a killing weight to the load that the 'sad time' has placed upon him. He cannot bear it any longer. With words of infinite pathos on his lips Lear dies comforted by the illusion of life in Cordelia. Time should be fixed for Lear's final departure from life, His stay here for a longer period of time will only prolong his suffering. Kent advises Edgar wisely :

Vex not his ghost : O ! let him pass; he hates him
 That would upon the rack of this tough world
 Stretch him out longer. (V.iii.312)

Out of the suffering of a particular point of time, the timeless is born.
 We learn the supreme lesson which is couched in the words of Edgar :

The weight of this sad time we must obey;
 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
 The oldest hath borne most : we that are young
 Shall never see so much, nor live so long (V. iii. 322)

There is something more. In the last scene Lear appears with Cordelia dead in his arms. The intense agony of a father's heart has been immortalised by this illusion of the present. Lear think Cordelia to be alive. This illusion of life makes him utter in ecstasy :

Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. (V. iii. 270)

The illusion continues till Lear's death. Forever will Lear love Cordelia, just as the bold lover of Keats, caught in the illusion of art, will love his beloved forever. Lear's agonised appeal to Cordelia 'to stay a little' shows the apotheosis of Lear, the father. The cry of a moment merges thus into eternal poetry.¹

1. All quotations from *King Lear* are taken from the Arden edition of the play edited by Kenneth Muir (London, 1991).

ARISTOTLE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS EURIPIDES : A STUDY

Ramkrishna Bhattacharya

ARISTOTLE, says Butcher, "mentions Euripides some twenty times in the *Poetics*, and in the great majority of the instances with censure".¹ One is a bit surprised to find such an inaccurate statement coming from so celebrated a scholar. The *Poetics* does refer to Euripides and his plays directly and indirectly nineteen times in all (or twenty, if one counts the second occurrence of his name in xiii. 6, 1453a 29) out of which only seven involve somewhat adverse judgment on Aristotle's part. "The great majority of the instances", far from being censorious or critical, are approbatory, sometimes even appreciative. Hence, the misconception so widely publicised by Butcher needs to be removed and a thorough study of Aristotle's attitude towards Euripides is called for, not only in reference to the *Poetics*, but to the *Rhetoric* as well, which makes this essay a critique of Butcher, too, simultaneously.

The very first reference to Euripides by name is directed against those who censured him for the unhappy ending of his plays (XIII.6). Aristotle in his turn defends Euripides :

It is, as we have said, the right ending, the best proof is that on the stage and in dramatic composition, such plays, if well worked out, are the most tragic in effect; and Euripides, faulty though he may be in the general management of his subject, yet is felt to be the most tragic of the poets. (XIII.6)

This is perhaps the greatest vindication of Euripides from a formalist critic. Butcher however took even this superlative as a left-handed compliment. "The 'powerful tragic effect' on the stage", he says, "... is a serious reservation for Aristotle to make, for he requires a good tragedy to produce its proper effect merely by reading."² In support of his contention he refers to XIV. 1 :

For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place. This is the impression we should receive from hearing the story of the Oedipus.

Butcher also refers to Susemihl's observation that the word *tragikos* is used in a somewhat restricted sense in two other passages in the *Poetics* (xiv.7 and xviii.5).³

All this however proves nothing. First, Aristotle was not at all 'literary' in his approach to plays. Unlike many of our modern critics he knew that the test of drama lay in successful stage-production. The whole of Ch. xxvi dealing with the relative merits of epic and tragedy is based on the idea that while the former is meant to be read, the latter is to be represented on stage. Secondly, the word *muthos* has no technical sense here. 'Oidipou muthon' does not refer to the play of Sophocles, but simply to its story. Else has rightly pointed out :

Does he [Aristotle] mean the story of Oedipus as it was fixed in outline by tradition, or the plot of the *Oedipus*, or "the story as told in the *Oedipus*" (i.e., as one would get it from reading the play itself)? All three views have been held by modern interpreters. But there cannot really be any doubt which of them is right. The reading of the whole play (the full text) cannot come into question here. Aristotle is still dealing with the structure of the play as such and has not gotten to the writing-out stage. Nor does he mean the story in general : *outo sunestanai ton mython* just above (which we could paraphrase by *toiauten dei einai ten ton pragmaton sustasin*) is too specific. The plot of the *Oedipus*, its outline or bare structure, *before the play is written out* is what Aristotle has in mind.⁴

Aristotle of course had no sympathy for such plays as depended on "extraneous aids" to produce the effect of pity and fear "by the mere spectacle", which, according to him, was a "less artistic method" (xiv.2). It is also noteworthy that in his classification of tragedy he excluded the purely spectacular element, citing two plays by Aeschylus for instance, but none by Euripides (xviii.2).⁵

Stage effect or the effect generated by the actual performance of a play was quite important to Aristotle, or why should he say that

In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the scene, as far as possible, before his eyes ..., The need of such a rule is shown by the fault found in Carcinus. Amphiaras was on his way from the temple. This fact escaped the observation of one who did not see the situation. On the stage, however, the piece failed, the audience being offended at the oversight. (xviii.1).

The visual presentation therefore is the testing ground on which the play stands or falls, notwithstanding skilful plot-construction or appropriate diction. And Euripides is justly vindicated in this regard.⁶

Let us now turn towards the faults of Euripides specified in other chapters.

- (i) Menelaus in *Orestes* is cited as an example of motiveless degradation of character (xv.5).
- (ii) The speech of Melanippe (in a lost play) is branded as "indecorous and inappropriate" (xv.5).
- (iii) The character of Iphigenia in *Iphigenia in Aulis* shows inconsistency "for Iphigenia the suppliant in no way resembles her later self" (xv.5).
- (iv) The *Deus ex Machina* in *Medea* does not arise out of the plot itself (xv.7).
- (v) Orestes (in *Iphigenia in Tauris*) reveals his own identity which is wanting in art. By speaking himself he says "what the poet, not what the plot requires" (xvi.4).
- (vi) Euripides's Chorus is not an intergral part of the whole and does not share in the action as it does in Sophocles (xviii.7).
- (vii) There is no inner necessity for introducing the irrational element in the appearance of Aegeus in *Medea* and the badness of Menelaus in *Orestes* (xxv.19).

As the last of the two faults listed in (vii) is virtually the same as the first one (i), it may be said that Euripides has been charged with seven different faults – three concerning his art of characterisation (i-iii) and four concerning plot-construction (iv-vii). Out of these seven, six refer to particular faults in individual plays and one to his plays in general (the mishandling of the Chorus).

Aristotle's objections to Euripides's plot-construction are quite valid. But his disapproval of some character-portrayals may not in all cases be acceptable. The charge of inconsistency against Iphigenia, for example, is apparently ill-conceived. As Gilbert Murry regretted : "Aristotle – such are the pitfalls in the way of human critics – takes her as a type of inconsistency."⁷

But that is beside the point. One has only to note how much praise is showered on Euripides for the able handling of Recognition (*anagnorisis*) in *Iphigenia in Tauris* (xi.5, xiv.9, xvi.8). The play, in spite of the fault mentioned above, is projected as the model of how to construct a plot, i.e., how to sketch the general outline first, and then to fill in the episodes and amplify in detail (xvii.3-4). The case of Medea slaying her children in cold blood is not censured (xiv.6).⁸ On the other hand, it provides Aristotle with an example of "the action ... done consciously and with knowledge of the person, in the manner of the older poets" (xiv.6).

Euripides is further praised for not trying to dramatise the whole story of the Fall of Troy but selecting portions of it (xviii.5). His practice of drawing men as they are is also defended on the ground that "this is how men say the thing is" (xxv.6-7), i.e., such is the customary opinion.

Euripides is again praised for rightly employing the rarer term instead of the ordinary one which makes his verse appear beautiful in comparison to the trivial one of Aeschylus (xxii.7).

The mention of *Ixiones* (xviii.2) is non-committal being only an example or the pathetic kind of tragedy. Another one (xviii.5), which might be an approbatory reference to Euripides's *Hekabe* has been read differently by Butcher. The title – *Niobe* or *Hekabe*? – is anyway a “notorious crux”,⁹ though the latter reading would once again show Aristotle's preference for Euripides to Aeschylus.

Thus even the statistical evidence disproves Butcher's view that Aristotle in the great majority of cases censured Euripides. In nine as against seven cases Aristotle approves of Euripides's practice and goes to the extent of calling him “the most tragic of the poets”.

Aristophanes (444 - 388 B.C.), a junior contemporary of Euripides (480 - 405 B.C.) and one of his earliest detractors had admirably framed a question :

“What are the qualities that you look for in a good poet?”

And Euripides had been made to reply :

“Technical skill – and he should teach a lesson,
make people into better citizens.”¹⁰

This we may take for the generally accepted view of the Athenian literati of the fifth century B.C. Aristotle, however, made a conscious detour of the question of overt didacticism and concentrated on the technical aspect alone. He must have had in his mind the diatribe of his former master, Plato on poetry in general. The following passage reads like a level-headed reply to the *Republic*, III.385c :

Again, in examining whether what has been said or done by some one is poetically right or not, we must not look merely to the particular act or saying, and ask whether it is poetically good or bad. We must also consider by whom it is said or done, to whom, when, by what means, or for what end; whether, for instance, it is to secure a greater good, or avert a greater evil. (*Poetics*, xxv.8).

It could as well be a reply to the detractors of Euripides.¹¹

As in his own time, so a century later, Euripides had to face violent criticism on three counts :

- (a) loose morals and heretical religious opinions.
- (b) slipshod language, specially the use of common words in high serious contexts, and
- (c) unabashed sentimentalism and pre-occupation with the daily problems of average men and women.¹²

Detraction of Euripides was the favourite plank of the conservatives of all hues. As against them, Aristotle stands firmly in favour of the most radical poet-dramatist of Greece. The mention of those "who censure Euripides" and the emphasis on the outcome of the play ("most tragic *in effect*") rather than on the slavish observance of the rules of art (see xiii.6) are significant pointers of Aristotle's own likes and dislikes, as also of the keen sensibility of the master logician.

It will also be rewarding in this context to refer to the *Rhetoric* where Euripides receives further praise on the very grounds that his critics chose to denounce him. Thus appropos of propriety of speech, Aristotle says :

Even in poetry, it is not quite appropriate that fine language should be used by a slave or a very young man, or about very trivial subjects : even in poetry the style, to be appropriate, must sometimes be toned down, though at other times heightened. We can now see that a writer must disguise his art and give the impression of speaking naturally and not artificially. (*Rhetoric*, iii.2).

This being the context, Euripides automatically came in as the best example :

We can hide our purpose successfully by taking the single words of our composition from the speech or ordinary life. This is done in poetry by Euripides, who was the first to show the way to his successors. (*Ibid.*, iii.2).

It is worthwhile to remember that Euripides has been singled out for praise in the *Poetics* for his felicity in employing "the rarer term instead of the ordinary one" and make his verse appear beautiful by such a substitution (*Poetics*, xxii.7). Aristotle had also "curtly dismissed" Ariphraides who, "anticipating Wordsworth's" objections to poetic diction,"¹³ had "ridiculed the tragedians for using phrases which no one would employ in ordinary speech" (*Poetics*, xxii.8). The *Rhetoric* evinces a more flexible attitude toward the question of diction and even censures Euripides in one instance for going beyond the dignity of the subject, i.e., he should have used an ordinary word instead of the metaphorical (*Rhetoric*, iii.2). The earlier work contains a more balanced and mature view on this point.

Speaking of how to begin a speech, Aristotle further says :

Introductions to forensic speeches, it must be observed, have the same value as the prologue of dramas and the introductions to epic poems The tragic poets, too, let us know the pivot of their play, if not at the outset like Euripides, at least somewhere in the preface to a speech like Sophocles(*Rhetoric*, III.14).

This is yet another feather in Euripides's cap.

To conclude : Butcher's account of Aristotle's attitude towards Euripides is misdirected. Not that Butcher had any axe to grind (as Aristophanes, Nietzsche or even Kitto in our days had).¹⁴ He in fact had tried to vindicate Euripides against Aristotle's opinions and had gone to the extent of saying that the latter was "in a measure defective".¹⁵ He could understand and appreciate the position of Euripides.¹⁶ One feels, had Aristotle gone beyond the study of the form, he too ironically, might have agreed with Butcher's judgments.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (New York : Dover, 1951), p.225.
2. *Ibid.*, p.307, n2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics : The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1957), p.408f. (Emphasis added).
5. The text is extremely corrupt. Following Susemihl, Butcher emended the passage by adding <e aple>, "the Simple", but left the lacuna as it was. Bywater emended it differently : *to do tetartion opsis*, "the fourth constituent is that of 'Spectacle'," and rearranged the lines. Else proposed to read [to de tetarton] <e de epeisodio> des, "[and the fourth species] <and the episodic>". This is a good example of cutting the Gordian knot. Bywater's emendation has so far proved to be the most acceptable to translators (e.g. Fyfe, Potts, Dorsch) though it leaves Else's objection unanswered : "Quite aside from our conclusion that *opsis* in the *Poetics* does not mean the stage 'spectacle' in general, it is inconceivable that Aristotle would have based one of the four kinds of tragedy on an element which he has explicitly declared (6.50b 17; cf. 14.53b 1-3) to be "least artistic and least proper to poetry" of all the six 'parts'." *Ibid.*, p.525. See also D. W. Lucas'. comments on *Poetics* 1456b 2 in his edition (Oxford : Clarendon Press (1978). 1988 reprint) pp. 187-88.
6. Also cf. "The proof is that the poets who have dramatised the whole story of the Fall of Troy, instead of selecting portions, like Euripides, or who have taken the whole tale of Niobe, and a part of the story, like Aeschylus, either fail utterly or *meet with poor success on the stage.*" *Poetics*, xviii.5 (Emphasis added).

All this, however, does not mean that Aristotle was unqualified in his praise of Euripides, for, as Else rightly pointed out, "Euripides emerges from the arena with a higher rating, but also with a keener assessment of his faults than we had been led to think." Else, p.404.

7. Gilbert Murray, *Literature of Ancient Greece*, Chicago : University Press, 1957, p.256.
8. Horace, one remembers, had forbidden such acts of horror on the stage, in *Ars Poetica*, line 185.
9. Else, p.545.
10. Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, lines 1008 ff.
11. The passage also shows "that Euripides' monarchy of the theatre did not go entirely unchallenged in the fourth century." Else, p.405.
12. F. L. Lucas, *Tragedy* (Bombay : Allied Publishers, 1966), Appendix, p.187.
13. See Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, *passim*.
14. See Bruno Snell, "Aristophanes and Aesthetic Criticism" in *The Discovery of the Mind* (New York : Harper and Row, 1960), pp.113-35.
15. Butcher, p.325
16. See *ibid.*, pp.324f, 359.

RAPE OF SPAIN : ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S UNCERTAIN IDEOLOGY

Sanjukta Dasgupta

ON August 1 1938 an English article translated into Russian titled "Humanity Will Not Forgive This" appeared in Pravda, Russia's premier newspaper. The article was written by Ernest Hemingway. The typescript of this article was discovered in the Hemingway Collection at John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, more than twenty years after Hemingway's death. It was published in the Toronto Star on 27th November 1982 and was subsequently published in many North American newspapers. Along with Hemingway's article on page 4 of Pravda there were articles by Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong, leaders of the Chinese Communist Party.

Moscow considered Hemingway politically reliable for in his *Ken* Magazine articles on the Spanish Civil War, he supported Communist strategies as a member of the C. P. would have done. Referring to a particular *Ken* article William Brash Watson writes, "Hemingway's *Ken* piece was virtually a Communist Party polemic on the subject". (*Hemingway Review* Vol III, no., 2 1988, p.116). In 1948, in a letter Hemingway writes, "I can take oath at anytime that I am not nor never have been a member of the C. P. (Communist Party)." John Raeburn, a recent Hemingway critic, however, observes, "He had been drawn to the Loyalist cause not to defend an ideology, but simply out of compassion. "(Raeburn 1984 : 91). Lionel Trilling conjectured that Hemingway's socialist concerns were a result of the pressure exerted on him by the American Leftists. The literary critic Edmund Wilson accused Hemingway of immaturity and ideological diletantism, "His antifascism was simple minded and derived from his compulsion to aggrandise his public reputation now as a dedicated warrior against fascism rather than as a fearless hunter stalking lions" (ibid ; 100).

Interestingly, in *Green Hills of Africa* published in 1936, Hemingway wrote about the great "advantage" the experience of war provided for a writer. He even qualified that an experience of a revolution can be of even greater advantage so long as one does not turn bigoted. He added analytically : "Just as civil war is the best war for a writer, the most complete...Writers are forged in injustice as a sword is forged." (*Green Hills* : 62) Soon enough he goes to Spain in order to experience the traumatic

Spanish Civil War at first hand : "It is part of one's Education. It will be quite an education when it is finished. You learn in this war if you listen. You most certainly did". (*For Whom the Bell Tolls* : 135). Also, Hemingway often asserted with pride that novels grew out of "lived experience" and could be described as fictionalised biographies (Baker : 407).

From even a brief study of Hemingway's involvement in the Spanish Civil War it becomes apparent that he was essentially and primarily a professional writer, entirely committed to his writing. In other words he was a careerist for whom experience was the fuel for his writing projects. John Fowles's statement, "Narcissism or pygmalionism, is the essential vice the writer must have". (Bradbury, 1990 : 148), rings true about Hemingway as writer. Like Flaubert whom he admired, Hemingway believed in a writer's freedom and so he adhered to Flaubert's dictum that a writer "must have neither religion, nor country, nor social conviction" (Lodge, 1990 : 565). So, Hemingway's *alter ego* Robert Jordan ruminates, "What were his politics then? He had none now, he told himself ... and I am going to write a true book" (FWBT : 163). Hemingway would have found Toni Morrison's declaration about a writer's political commitment strange : "I don't believe any real artists have ever been non-political. They may have been insensitive to this particular plight or that, but they were political because that's what an artist is, a politician" (Taylor, 1994 : 4).

Saul Bellow's description of American writers of his time seems eminently applicable to Hemingway's temperament : "They are both conservative and radical. They are not taught to care genuinely for any man or any cause" (Bradbury : 63). But Hemingway cared for both man and his cause. Of further significance is, obviously, Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus identifying family, education and aesthetics, among others, which, naturally, may be regarded as responsible for nurturing a culture of self-justification, rootlessness and bohemianism. Jean Paul Sartre writes, "No writer is an instantaneous consciousness, a pure timeless affirmation of freedom nor does he soar above history, he is involved in it". (Trivedi, 1984 : 140).

Hemingway was not an ideologue. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ideology as "Science of ideas; visionary speculation; manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual, ideas at the basis of some economic or political system" (Fowler, 601). So, quite without embarrassment Hemingway's protagonist Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* makes a "separate peace" and declares, "I was not made to think. I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine" (FA : 242).

Similarly, despite his concern for the Republican cause, Ernest Hemingway's role in the Spanish Civil War was that of a non-attached participant, an observer. Though volunteers from both sides of the Atlantic

became members of the International Brigade, Hemingway desisted. Referring to a young enthusiast James Lardner's enlistment Hemingway wrote, "I did everything to discourage him from enlisting" (*Hemingway Review*, Ibid 121). A majority of Americans in the Washington and Lincoln battalions were students who fought with great gallantry. Hemingway however went to Spain commissioned as a war correspondent for NANA (North American Newspaper Alliance) with a contract of 500 dollars per cabled dispatch. Haggling with the NANA General Manager John Wheeler regarding underpayment, Hemingway emphasised the lack of bias in his dispatches, "My stuff on Spain has been consistently accurate .. I gave full accounts of government disasters and criticized their weaknesses in the same measure I reported their success" (H. R. *ibid.* 121).

But Hemingway's brinkmanship was not unexpected. It merely reflect his discretion, for the US foreign policy of the thirties was one of indeterminism, oscillating between neutrality and sympathy. Hemingway's responses in this connection were not extraordinary but typical. The American newspapers, American intellectuals and humanists supported the Republican cause in Spain and disapproved of US government policies. Perhaps inspired by but surely sensing the popular trend Hemingway titled his 1937 novel *To Have and Have Not*. In it the dying declaration of Harry Morgan, "One man alone ain't got. No man alone now.. No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody chance" (THHN : 225), has been cited as the turning point of Hemingway's *weltanschauung*. His detractors who had so long described him as a bourgeois bohemian, a megalomaniac, a life-member of the Lost Generation, veered round and declared that at last Hemingway had matured into a writer of significance. Many however regarded the novel as Hemingway's superb sleight of hand ; he was accused of superimposing a socialist theme on a rather inconsequential story, "his least credible piece of fiction" (Wilson, 1947 : 187).

In a letter to his Russian friend Ivan Kashkin Hemingway wrote, "A writer is like a Gypsy. He owes no allegiance to any government. A true work of art endures forever; no matter what its politics" (*Letters* : 419). In his nonfiction, letters and interviews Hemingway repeatedly emphasised that he was an advocate of unbiased truth. Back from his first trip to war-torn Spain, Hemingway addressed the Writers Congress on June 4, 1937. He declared that he was anti-fascist for Fascism subverted truth. Roland Barthes writes in *Mythologies* that the bourgeois writer is invariably fascinated by universalism and truth. Defining myth as depoliticized speech from a semiological viewpoint, Barthes states, "The mythologist is condemned to live in a theoretical sociality; for him, to be in society is, at best, to be truthful" (Sontag, 1993, 147). Hemingway had no specific ideological conviction, he was pro-Loyalist for he was anti-fascist. Perhaps the US Foreign policy can be held indirectly responsible for the American

writer's indeterminate ideological space. Ironically, though Hemingway professed some confused sense of an ideological conviction, perhaps Roosevelt and the US government policy had none, so far as the Spanish Civil War was concerned.

But historical records and statistics prove that the Spanish Civil War was indeed an ideological war, a war of attrition. Records show that 40,000 foreigners fought in the International Brigade. There were 28,000 volunteers from the USA of whom 999 were killed. Michael Ferrara, the biographer notes that there were 3,354 Americans in Spain, of whom 1,819 were Communists. (Thomas, 1961 : 637) In his second NANA dispatch from Spain Hemingway noted, "...Italian regular troops now in Spain number 88,000. German troops ... numbered between 16,000 and 20,000" (H. R. 15). Such was the Non-Intervention Policy of the big powers! A Non-Intervention Committee was formed in 1936. *The Times* (10.8.36) reported the German Counsellor's assurance, "no war materials had been sent from Germany and none will" (Thomas, 259). That very same day the American Consul noted, "the arrival of ten new Savoia bombers from Italy, eighteen Junkers, six German fighters and anti-aircraft guns-together with twenty Italian pilots and thirty Germans" (USD - *The Foreign Relations of the United States Department Papers* Vol.2 1936,481).

Breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement were rampant. France regularly despatched aircraft excusing them as "errors of navigation" (Thomas : 259). Mexico openly sent arms aid while Soviet diplomats who had served in the Red Army made the Gaylord's hotel in Madrid their headquarters. The historian Hugh Thomas added in a significant footnote, "For an extraordinary picture of life in this hotel in August 1936-March or April 1937, see Chap 18 of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*-perhaps the best piece of reportage Hemingway had yet written" (Thomas : 262).

Hemingway was outraged by the blatant hypocrisy of the Non-Intervention policy which indulged in equivocation and doubletalk. In 1936, US foreign policy was one of strictest neutrality and its professed strategy of moral aloofness seemed strange in the wake of the rape of democracy in Spain. Roosevelt was praised by France as a "true gentleman" for promulgating the Embargo Act thereby preventing shipments of arms aid from reaching Spain (Thomas : 339). American socialists and liberal intellectuals protested vociferously. The columnist Drew Pearson wrote in *New Orleans States* (9.5.38), "Washington has seen all kinds of lobbying..but seldom has it seen people spend money to come from all over the country in a cause from which they would receive no material benefit". (Thomas : 336). Also, "American newspapers took sides in the war with even greater vehemence than did those in Britain and France. American Catholics attacked reporters of Republican sympathies and liberals attacked those who wrote in apology for the Nationalists" (Thomas : 233).

In 1938, as the end of the civil war seemed imminent, the embargo on US aid to Spain was lifted but by then Spain had been brutally ravished and humiliated, The battles of Jarama, Catalonia and the destruction of Guernica all bear witness to the total violation of human rights. The second World War began and significantly, after the war, "connection with the Spanish cause came to be regarded as subversive. The Abraham Lincoln Battalion itself was declared so in 1946..." (Thomas : 623). The ambivalence of his home country about a humanistic issue surprised and confused Hemingway. But Hemingway's bias became apparent from his NANA dispatches, the *Esquire* and *Ken* magazine write-ups. Apart from fund raising campaigns, in a dispatch dated May 1, 1938, Hemingway even urged the US government to rise out of its apathy. The article was never published. William Brasch Watson conjectures that it may have been sent to a Communist Party publication or it may have been written to aid the campaign in the United States to end the arms embargo against the Republic (H. R. : 88). Carlos Baker notes that Hemingway appealed to Roosevelt, "to become a great president by opposing Chamberlain and supporting the Republic." (Baker : 504). Yet despite such serious initiation into western politics, we find that even then Hemingway the writer dominated Hemingway the propagandist. So an intended article for *Ken* becomes the celebrated short story "Old Man and the Bridge" as does Dispatch 8 for NANA which becomes a human interest anecdote unlike the others which dealt with military and political strategies. His propagandist play *The Fifth Column* as well as the documentary film *The Spanish Earth* underscored his artistic perception. When young Jasper Wood impulsively published the narrative of *The Spanish Earth* Hemingway's reaction was that of a literary critic, "The Script... Inaccurate and the Translations.. Preposterous and that without Pictures or a Scenario describing what is passing on the screen the commentary is meaningless and utterly ridiculous" (H. R. *ibid* ; 128).

But it was in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, his longest and best-selling novel that this oscillation between a writer's responsibilities and adherence to a particular ideology comes to the fore. So, Carlos Baker observes, "Fully, and for the most part unselfishly, committed to the Spanish people and their cause, he knew at the same time that this was kind of experience by which he could grow, adding new dimensions to his stature as a novelist." (Baker : 467). Also, in a letter to Ivan Kashkin Hemingway highlighted his passion for writing, free of political commitments, : "...in stories about the war I try to show all the different sides of it, taking it slowly and honestly and examining it in many ways." This critical analysis of his own narrative technique is clinched with the characteristic statement, "to hell with war for a while. I want to write" (*Letters*, 480). Elsewhere, he announced candidly that he was "not a Catholic writer, or a Party writer or even an American writer, but only a writer trying to tell the truth as he had personally learned it" (Baker : 525).

When *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was published in 1940, Hemingway's Leftist friends were disappointed, regarding it as an act of betrayal, while sales-figures soared, Hollywood purchased the film rights and Hemingway became a celebrity. Socialist dialogues and sentiments were inserted into the text to create an impression of accuracy and authenticity, they were not the author's views. So, we find the Spanish guerilla Anselmo stating with derision, "Now, we come for something of consummate importance and thee, with thy dwelling place to be undisturbed, puts thy foxhole before the interests of humanity" (FWBT : 11). Similarly, Pilar's tirade against the social system recalls the fiery speeches of La Pasionaria — "In a country where the bourgeoisie over-eat so that their stomachs are all ruined.. and the poor are hungry from their birth till they die.." (FWBT : 184). On the other hand, Hemingway's protagonist, the militant intellectual Robert Jordan frankly "voiced his detachment : You're not a true Marxist and you know it. You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You believe in Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (FWBT : 305). Yet he declared that he "felt an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it" (FWBT : 235). When asked whether he was a Communist Jordan replied, "No, I am an anti-fascist" (FWBT : 66). Self-analytically he muses, "Don't kid yourself with too much of dialectics. They are for some, but not for you" (FWBT : 305).

Interestingly, as early as 1932 Hemingway had written, "I can't be a Communist because I hate tyranny, and, I suppose, government" (*Letters*, 360). In a more frivolous vein he wrote in 1937, "My sympathies are always, for exploited working people against absentee landlords, even if I drink around with the landlords and shoot pigeons with them. I would as soon shoot them as the pigeons" (*Letters* : 456). Hemingway's response to Western politics was like that of an adventurer. His flirtation with ideology was short, intense and overwhelming like his many love affairs. For Hemingway the Spanish Civil War was another opportunity of living dangerously, a romantic adventure in world politics. He could never embrace any particular system, discipline or organisation. Like all bourgeois intellectuals he idealized freedom thereby entrapping himself in the so-called avant-garde pose of the bohemian intellectual. Roland Barthes states that the approach of such a writer is inevitably ambivalent, "His task always remains ambiguous.. He can live revolutionary action vicariously : hence the self-conscious character of his function, .. muddled and excessively simplified..." (Sontag : 146, although Barthes himself was not known for such action).

Since Fascism rejected the importance of the individual, the ideals of truth and humanism, bourgeois writers and poets such as Auden, Spender, Gide and Hemingway among others, declared they were antifascists. Their enthusiasm however evaporated as the civil war ended. They were disillusioned with Stalinist Russia which frowned upon rootless bohemianism. Referring

to D. H. Lawrence's anti-fascist stance, quite akin to that of Hemingway and other bourgeois intellectuals, Terry Eagleton criticizes the contradictions and weakness of their approach. Such an anti-fascist author experiences a "perpetual oscillation between a proud celebration of individual autonomy and a hunger for social integration ; he wants men to be drilled as soldiers, but individual soldiers" (Rice & Waugh : 72).

II

Though Hemingway aimed at neutrality, impartiality and impassibility, the three essentials in objective writing according to Wayne Booth, he was not uniformly successful in his purpose. Anticipating such lapses in objective style Booth cautions, "Impersonal narration may, in fact, encourage the very subjectivism that it is supposed to cure" (Lodge : 565). As a matter of fact, from the 1940's till his death in 1961, Hemingway reverted to his erstwhile narrative style, the comparatively more subjective, interiorized mode of writing. As he remained a writer without any specific ideology, his indeterminism was apparent despite the subtle endeavour to fuse the subjective and objective reality, the experiential world and the perceptual world. He had integrated them successfully in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* but *Across the River and Into the Trees* and the posthumously published novels *Islands in the Stream* and *The Garden of Eden* focused on protagonists trapped in the prison of their selfhoods, wallowing in intense subjectivity. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway did try to resurrect the theme of human solidarity and interdependence, but Santiago's realization was more on an asocial level.

Alienation is recognized as a positive factor by Hemingway. As early as 1936 in *Green Hills of Africa* Hemingway had reasoned that a true writer is one who works alone, finding complete satisfaction from his work, which is timeless—"you exchange the pleasant, comforting stench of comrades for something you can never feel in any other way than by yourself" (*Green Hills* : 116). Expectedly, in his speech after being awarded the Nobel Prize, Hemingway reiterated the sense of subjectivity and alienation, "Writing at its best, is a lonely life.. a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him" (Baker : 805-6).

For Ernest Hemingway writing was both a vocation and a profession. As he believed in a serious writer's loneliness and segregation from the socio-political system he simultaneously believed in publicity and a public image. He became a cult figure in his time, a role model for men, a heart throb for women.

It seems more than obvious that it is precisely Hemingway's uncertain ideological space that led to ambivalent and perplexed critical response to his political position. But at the same time historiographic evidences

emphasize that in the prevalent socio-cultural and political environment of America between 1920 and 1960, politically aware and occasionally politically inspired, Hemingway played the role of a career writer with sense and sensibility. His writing was rarely agitprop, nor did he have a political agenda. So, Michael Reynolds, Hemingway's recent and most reliable biographer observes, "Never a radical, Hemingway became apolitical and remained so for the rest of his life...one of the least overtly political writers of his generation" (Reynolds, 1986 : 194).

But in a letter to Scott Fitzgerald in 1931 Hemingway puts on record that he was a "paid up Communist like Bunny (Edmund) Wilson, in 1919-20-21 when we were all paid up Communists. Bunny and all those guys thought it was all tripe as indeed it proved to be — but suppose everybody has to go through some political or religious faith sooner or later. Personally would rather go through things sooner and get your disillusion behind you instead of ahead of you." (*Letters* : 229) Nevertheless, Hemingway seemed rather uneasy whenever his political site was interrogated. In a letter to Paul Romaine in 1932 he wrote, "I will not outline my political beliefs to you since I have no need to and since *I could be jailed for their publication...*". He added with characteristic angst and sarcasm, "But if they are not much further left than yours which sounded like sentimental socialism I will move them further over" (*Letters* : 365, italics mine). Also in 1932 Hemingway supported the American socialist Eugene V. Debs for president, voted for him, which was the last time he ever voted and declared that he then retired from the "giddy political whirl", as recounted in a letter to Lillian Ross in 1948 (*Letters* : 648).

Nevertheless, idealism, ideology and individualism continued to influence and disturb Hemingway's professed retirement and he helped the Cuban Communist party by donating 20,000 dollars, the largest sum contributed by any foreigner. (Donaldson, 1916 : 167). After Castro came to power Hemingway kissed the Cuban flag, declared that he was a Cuban himself and added, "I have complete faith in the Castro Revolution because it has the support of the Cuban people. I believe in his cause". (ibid : 167). The Hemingway critic Kenneth Kinnamon categorically sums up Hemingway's political position by stating, "Despite his individualism and distrust of politicians, Ernest Hemingway was always on the left" (ibid : 168). But yet again in a letter written in 1958 to his son Patrick, Hemingway expressed his misgivings about the Cuban revolution, reminiscent of his reservations about the Republican atrocities in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, recorded so graphically in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*- "I am not a big fear danger pussy but living in a country where no one is right — *both sides atrocious* — knowing what sort of stuff and murder will go on when the new ones come in — seeing the abuses of those in now — I am fed on it". (*Letters* : 888, italics mine).

Hemingway remained consistently inconsistent about his ideological space. I conclude with an excerpt from a letter written to me by Mary Hemingway on February 17, 1979 : "You ask if there were a "positive end or goal" that Ernest was "in quest for". No I don't. He enjoyed writing and as far as I know, was pleased when the critics and the public liked it. But, otherwise I don't know of any "positive goal or end". Obviously this letter supports ideas I have been trying to prove till now, but I would also like to say that while the Hemingway-person is fully indeterminate the "text Hemingway", the writer, tilts more toward the left, but indeterminate yet.

Ernest Hemingway was not a writer committed to any particular ideology. Writing truly was his personal purpose, profession and politics.

REFERENCES

Books

1. Baker, Carlos. 1972. **Ernest Hemingway : A Life Story**. U.K. Penguin.
2. Bradbury, Malcolm. ed., 1990. **The Novel Today**. U. K. Fontana.
3. Donaldson, Scott. ed., 1996. **Ernest Hemingway**. Cambridge University Press, U. S. A.
4. Hemingway, Ernest. 1940. **For Whom the Bell Tolls**. New York : Scribner. 1961. **A Farewell To Arms**. New York : Scribner. 1977. **Green Hills of Africa**. St. Albans : Triad/Panther. 1981. **Letters**. (ed.,) Baker, C. U. K. : Panther, Granada Publishing Ltd.
5. Lodge, David. 1990. **Twentieth Century Literary Criticism**. U. K. Longman.
6. Raeburn, John. 1984. **Fame Became Him : Hemingway as Public Writer**. U. S. A. : Indiana University Press.
7. Reynolds, Michael. 1986. **The Young Hemingway**. U. K. : Basil Blackwell.
8. Rice, Philip & Waugh, Patricia. 1992. **Modern Literary Theory**. U. K. : Edward Arnold.
9. Sontag, Susan. ed., 1995. **A Roland Barthes Reader**. U. K. : Vintage.
10. Thomas, Hugh. 1961. **The Spanish Civil War**. U. K. : Eyre & Spottiswode.
11. Trivedi, Harish. 1984. **The Americal Political Novel**. India : Allied Publishers.
12. Wisdon, Edmund. 1947. **The Wound and the Bow**. New York : Oxford University Press.

Journals

1. Charles, Oliver M. **The Hemingway Review** vol. III no. 2 Spring 1988. (Spanish Civil War Issue).

Edward Said's recent redefinition of the novel acknowledging its historicity and yet not limiting it to historical documentation seems relevant in critiquing Hemingway's novels in general and **For Whom the Bell Tolls** in particular. Said states, "The novel is an incorporative, quasi-encyclopaedic cultural form. Packed into it are both a highly regulated plot mechanism and an entire system of social reference that depends on the existing institutions of bourgeois society, their authority and power. The novelistic hero and heroine exhibit the restlessness and energy characteristic of the enterprising bourgeoisie. Novels therefore end either with the death of a hero or heroine ... who by virtue of overflowing energy does not fit into the orderly scheme of things, or with the protagonists' accession to stability..." [Said Edward, 1994, **Culture and Imperialism**. Vintage, U.K. p.84] On page 87 of the same book Said however cautions, "But for all their social presence, novels are not reducible to a sociological current and cannot be done justice to aesthetically, culturally, and politically as subsidiary forms of class, ideology, or interest."

(This paper was presented at the Hemingway Conference held at Hyderabad in 1995, organized by the American Studies Research Centre).

TRAVELLER EXTRAORDINARY

Jayati Gupta

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU'S (1689-1762) *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), may be called a travel-memoir consisting of a small corpus of fifty-two letters written during the short period of 1716-1718. The actual letters were addressed to Lady Mary's usual correspondents (her sister, various London socialites, the French savant Abbe Antonio Conti, her admirer and friend Alexander Pope) when she accompanied her husband Edward Wortley Montagu, a Whig aristocrat and diplomat, who was named ambassador to Turkey and consul-general of the Levant under the regime of George the First in 1716.

This curious epistolary evidence of her Turkish experiences was carefully compiled by Lady Mary herself from the original letters (of which she kept abstracts) which were edited, transposed, manipulated or censored of personal details to be readied for publication. By 1724, two manuscript volumes of the album were in circulation. Mary Astell, the feminist pamphleteer (1668-1731) to whom the manuscript was loaned wrote an exuberant preface in the blank pages at the end of the second volume. Lady Mary carried these volumes with her when she left England in 1739. In 1761, when she returned to England after her husband's death, she had already gifted them to Reverend Benjamin Sowden, an English clergyman at Rotterdam. In 1763, an imperfect copy was used for the first edition of the letters. All subsequent editions were based on this, until 1861 when the original albums were first used.

* * *

The Embassy Letters generated immense interest amongst contemporaries. It was uncommon for a woman to travel, let alone venture on the arduous overland journey, across the vast Serbian deserts to Constantinople. This historical city was a doorway into the Orient, "a new World where everything I see appears to me a change of Scene" (312). In the early decades of the eighteenth century, orientalism as a cult did not yet exist. Little new information had been disseminated about the Near or the Far East : it was more of a free subject to be empirically observed and mimetically described, to be thought about or acted upon. The emphasis in this account was on the individual rather than the European male hegemonic perspective. The perceiving subject as a geographically removed

and culturally different. Other was equally aware of her gender. What seems to have been central to these letters is the female outlook and what new was the manner in which the woman made sense of the Orient.

Lady Mary's was a lone female voice in the domain of travel discourse in this century. In this age of maritime exploration, commercial expansion and scientific endeavour, the new heroism was essentially linked to exciting expeditions into remote but actual geographical locales. The encounters were not only with physical dangers like wild beasts or savage men, it also meant confrontations with cultures that were alien. Expectedly the travel-text both authentic and fictional, was dominated by the male voice and centred around myths of male prowess. It incorporated narrative structures based on sagas of endurance and survival, involving dramatic adventures, reversals of fortune and challenging confrontations. In such narrative-structuring, women are marginalised so completely that they are positioned even outside the peripheral consciousness of the traveller/adventurer.

Even in that classic of travel fiction, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, the feminine presence is almost negated. Defoe creates a paradigm of English society, an invented world without sexuality. While Crusoe's idyllic island retreat reminds us of the Biblical Eden, it deliberately regresses from history and reactivates the myth of innocence and guiltlessness in a prelapsarian state of being.

No woman of their own race accompanied the early European or English voyagers. They were equally skeptical of any interaction with women of other races and cultures. Lady Mary had intruded into a popular genre of writing and had found it "far remov'd from Truth and so full of Absurditys". Voyages to the Levant were read because, "They never fail giving you an Account of the Women, which 'tis certain they never saw, and talking very wisely of the Genius of the Men, into whose Company they are never admitted and very often describe Mosques which they dare not peep into" (368).

Lady Mary sought to make an impact on contemporaries by a travelogue that challenged popular expectations from the travel-text. Precisely because she affiliates herself to this form of writing, she can fulfil or thwart reader-expectations. It is not the trials and tribulations of the journey that this intrepid lady-traveller recounts, but she records her enjoyment as she fancied herself "upon party's of Pleasure than upon the road." (250) She shocked the circle of aristocratic Viennese ladies by ignoring the list of potential "Terrors" that loomed large before her of "being froze to death, bury'd in the snow, and taken by the Tartars who ravage that part of Hungary I am to passe..." (297). With her Christian faith in Providence, she challenges

male travellers writing in the tradition of survival literature by embarking upon "a Journey that has not been undertaken by any Christian since the Time of the Greek Emperors." (310). Her sole attempt was to reveal and discover a country that was as enchanting as "a fresh scene of an opera everyday" (309).

* * *

Most eighteenth century travel accounts claimed veracity and incorporated elaborate disclaimers from time to time that the narrative was in any sense imaginary. In this way the rational traveller set himself apart from the legendary writers of monstrous fables. The traveller tried to convince the reader that his observations were empirical, accurate, exact, and in every sense truthful. Lady Mary protests, "but upon my word I have not yet made use of the privilege of a Traveller, and my whole account is writ with the same plain Sincerity of Heart..." (256)

She was acutely conscious of the truth/fiction dichotomy that informed travel discourse in general. Lady Mary hoped to exteriorize the Levant by rendering the religion and morality, the manners and customs of Ottoman Turkey in a form that was explicit. She brought to her writing the clear-sighted observation, the unprejudiced tolerance and candid sympathy with an alien culture, which were integral features of the European Enlightenment.

The *Letters* do not imitate the "common stile of Travellers" (254) that invariably exaggerated facts. Lady Mary openly scorned the ridiculous assumptions of an anonymous correspondent of hers to whom she wrote on 1 January 1717, from Vienna :

"You chide me for my Lazynesses in not telling you a thousand agreeable and surprizing things that you say you are sure I have seen or heard. Upon my word, Madam, 'tis my regard to Truth and not Lazynesses that do not entertain you with as many prodigys as other travellers use to divert their Readers with. I might easily pick up wonders in every town I pass through, or tell you a long series of Popish miracles, but I cannot fancy that there is anything new in letting you know that priests can lye and the mob believe all over the World...Would you have me write novellas like the Countesse of D'Aunois? And is it not better to tell you a plain Truth..." (292)

Here was a travel writer who refused to indulge and entertain her readers by telling them "of Anthropophagi [and] men whose heads grow below their shoulders." Lady Mary's magnificent obsession was creating a

"real" picture of the Levant that would render the actuality with exactness. The truth itself was as rare and strange as an exciting fable and needed no rhetorical embellishments.

These travel despatches confirmed the existence of a "real" Levant that was a tangible geographical and historical entity. Lady Mary had read Paul Rycaut's *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* which was a continuation upto 1687 of Knolles's authoritative volume, *The General History of the Turks* (1603). She was only half-believing about the images of the Levant found in the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures, Homer or the texts of Greek and Roman antiquity. She dismissed some contemporary accounts like that of Dumont¹ who "writ with equal ignorance and confidence" (366). Literary and fictional representations of Turkey were popularised by English translations of Antoine Galland's French version of the *Arabian Nights* or *One Thousand and One Nights* (1704-1712) and *Persian Tales* or *One Thousand and One Days* translated from the French by Ambrose Philips (1714-1715). Such renderings created a tradition of thought and imagery, certain stereotypes of presentation, some symbolic ideas and notions about oriental life.

Lady Mary set herself the task of restructuring the Levant. Her persistent claim is that she was deconstructing existing knowledge about the Near East and offering perspectives that were closer to the truth. Mary Astell, privileging the female view-point remarked :

The World should see to how much better purpose the Ladys Travel than their Lords, and that whilst it is surfeited with Male Travels, all in the same Tone and stuff with the same Trifles, a Lady has the skill to strike out a New Path, and to embellish a worn out subject with variety of fresh and elegant Entertainment.²

* * *

The earliest images of the Levant were to be found in the writings of antiquity. It incorporated the idea of a Golden Age overflowing with natural abundance and plenty. Greek pastoral poetry and the Homeric epics, the Bible and the Hebrew Scriptures merely contributed images to perpetuate this literary tradition.

For Lady Mary, it was difficult to divorce herself completely from this Western European tradition of ancient history, classical legend, and

1. Jean Dumont (d.1726) French historian. Author of *Nouveau Voyage au Levant* (1694), translated into English in 1696.

2. Mary Astell's Preface. *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, vol. I, edited by Robert Halsband, p. 467.

scriptural authority. In an ingenious and subtle manner she subverts the truth/fiction dichotomy by transforming it into an aesthetic debate – a typical Enlightenment debate between art and nature or poetry and fact. Almost apologetically she confesses : "...’tis more than an ordinary Discretion that can resist the wicked suggestions of Poetry in a place where Truth for once furnishes all the ideas of Pastoral?" (331) The Edenic charm of the Turkish countryside is captured in a letter : "Vines grow wild on all the Hills, and the perpetual Spring they enjoy makes everything look gay and flourishing..." (311) The fertile richness of the sundrenched east is almost proverbial. The description of Nissa, the former capital of Serbia, "situate in a fine Plain on the river Nissava, in a very good Air, and so fruitful a Soil that the great plenty is hardly credible" simply verbalizes the concept of abundant natural wealth. Such a large quantity of wine is produced that one had "to dig holes in the Earth to put it in, not having Vessells enough in the Town to hold it." (310) Rural Turkey corresponds so closely to the imaginative representations found in antiquity, that the factual almost incorporates the imaginary. In an ingenious way, by locating the past in the present and relating the present to the past, Lady Mary has traced a continuity in the imaginative and empirical discourses relating to the Levant.

She observes, however, that this was a society that was not democratic but hierarchical. It was one appropriated by the culturally superior upper classes which systematically excluded the lower orders. Sadly enough, "the happiness of this Plenty is Scarce perceiv'd by the oppress'd people." (311) The corruption of this idyllic paradise is associated in her mind with stereotypes of tyranny and cruelty, conquest and subjugation that were linked to the spread of Islam, and the peril that it posed to the entire culture of Christian Europe.

Throughout the neo-classical period, the Near East was an object of special attention. Interest in the actual state of civilisation was coupled with an antiquarian concern in locating ancient sites, and explicating the texts of Homer or Herodotus. Here, in Turkey, Lady Mary was pleasantly surprised to find that life itself approached art. In a letter to Alexander Pope she wrote :

I read over your Homer³ here with an infinite Pleasure, and find several little passages explain'd that I did not before entirely comprehend the Beauty of, many of the customs and much of the dress then in fashion being yet retain'd ; and I don't wonder to find more remains here of an Age so distant than is to be found in any other Country...(332)

3. Pope's translation of the *Iliad* vol.II, March 1716.

Lady Mary took some pains to acquire a working knowledge of Arabic. She had the unique opportunity to converse with their host at Belgrade, Achmet-Beg, who "has been educated in the most polite Eastern Learning, being perfectly skill'd in the Arabic and Persian languages, and is an extraordinary Scribe, which they call Effendi"(307). Some Arabian verses were explained to her, and this diversion gave her scope to observe that these oriental verses were "in numbers not unlike ours, generally alternate verse, and a very musical sound. Their expressions of Love are very passionate and lively..."(307). In one of her later letters she transcribes a Turkish love letter (387) and translates passionate love poems written by Ibrahim Bassa (333). Amongst her own countrymen she thus placed herself on par with authentic historians and oriental scholars. Achmet-Beg was so impressed by her narration of some of the Persian Tales that he thought that she understood Persian! Such acquaintance with the language made her observe :

The Eastern manners give a great light into many Scripture passages that appear odd to us, their Phrases being commonly what we should call Scripture Language. The vulgar Turk is very different from what is spoke at Court or amongst the people of figure, who always mix so much Arabic and Persian in their discourse that it may very well be call'd another Language..."(333)

The structure of narration throughout implies that the writer had access to information because she was particularly "diligent" in her "enquiries and observations." Lady Mary attributes the "imperfect relations of the manners and Religion of these people" to the fact that Turkey was usually visited only by merchants "who mind little but their own Affairs, or Travellers who make too short a stay to be able to report anything exactly of their own knowledge" (315). She shares this view with her illustrious predecessor Monsieur Thevenot, who, we are told, "undertook his Travels in a far more noble prospect, than that which carries a great many others so far from home ; who making their trade their main business, cannot bestow but the least part of their Application upon curious Observation."⁴

Lady Mary confesses that she rambled everyday about Constantinople either incognito or "wrap'd up in my *ferige* and *asmak*,...and amuse myself with seeing all that is curious in it. I know you'll expect this declaration should be follow'd with some account of what I have seen, but I am in no humour to copy what has been writ so often over... I will not tell you what you may find in every Author that has writ of this Country...I am

4. *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant. In Three Parts. Newly done out of French.* London 1687. Preface by S. Lovell.

more enclin'd, out of a true female spirit of Contradiction, to tell you the falsehood of a great part of what you find in authors..." (405).

* * *

In this empirical journey of social and moral enquiry, Lady Mary focuses her attention on the very sensitive issue of women's position in Turkish society, especially the role assigned to them by the tenets of Islam. Most available accounts of Turkey reveal the utter contempt with which women were regarded :

The Turks do not believe that Women go to Heaven, and hardly account them Rational Creatures ; the truth is, they take them only for their service as they would a Horse...their husbands who are very Jealous, and put so little confidence in the frailty of that Sex, that they suffer them not to show themselves to men,...they suffer them not to go to the Mosques where they would only distract the Men from their Devotion...⁵

Lady Mary's unobstructed sojourn through Turkish towns, her daring intrusions into male arenas like the Exchange and market-place, her illuminating conversations with Turkish men of quality and substance, her intimate conversations with Sultanas in the haram—all this give her a slightly different perspective of the oriental woman.

She does not subscribe entirely to the stereotype of the passive and jealously guarded Turkish beauty. The *asmak* or Turkish veil, the pieces of muslin that almost wholly cover both the face and the richly embroidered, brocaded and damasked dress, is an integral part of the woman's attire. Westerners view it as a symbol of her confinement and her lack of freedom. Paradoxically, Lady Mary sees it as a potent instrument that empowers the woman to lead her own life :

This perpetual Masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of Discovery...the Great Ladys seldom let their Gallants know who they are, and 'tis so difficult to find it out that they can very seldom guess at the name they have corresponded with above halfe a yeare together...I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the Empire. (328-29)

As Achmet-Beg tells Lady Mary, half in jest, "when our wives cheat us, nobody knows it."

In the Grand Palaces or Seraglios, the women's apartments were "separated from the rest of the lodgings, and no man enters it, unless the Master of the House, or some Eunuch."⁶ In these innermost recesses of the

5. Ibid., Chapter XLII p. 56

6. Thevenot, chapter XIX, p. 26

Seraglio the women led their own lives of pleasure and leisured ease. Spatially, it was far removed from the outside world of tyranny, oppression and mundane concerns.

Lady Mary by virtue of her gender and social position as the English ambassador's wife, had privileged access into harems and Bagnios which were "always forbidden ground" for men. Her account, she reassures her readers, would be very different therefore from that of "the common Voyage writers, who are very fond of speaking of what they don't know" (343). Paul Rycaut, the historian, is self-conscious about introducing his readers into the apartments "where the Grand Signiors Mistresses are lodged." He confesses that his "acquaintance there (as all other my conversation with women in Turkey) is but strange and unfamiliar." Yet he asserts that "I shall to the best of my information write a short account of these Captivated Ladies, how they are treated, immured, educated and prepared for the great achievements of the Sultan's affections."⁷

Lady Mary's was the rare eye-witness account of the manners and customs inside the harem. "I was invited to dine with the Grand Vizier's Lady, and...I prepar'd myselfe for an Entertainment which was never given before to any Christian" (347). In this exclusive despatch from Adrianople, Lady Mary speaks of being received at the court door by the black Eunuch who guarded the women and being "conducted through several rooms where finely dressed She Slaves were ranged on each side."

Literally and metaphorically, Lady Mary penetrates the inner chambers, in an effort to fathom the depths of the feminine mind by understanding their curious customs. She certainly had some preconceived notions of the opulence and splendour associated with the exotic orient. These she modifies or confirms by her empirical observations.

On her first visit to a harem, she was "surpriz'd to observe so little Magnificence." She discovers that eastern spiritualism was only the other side of its sensuality. The Grand Vizier's Lady tells her "that she was no longer of an Age to spend either her time or Money in Superfluitys, that her whole expence was in Charity and her Employment praying to God." (347-48)

This portrayal is given "quite another Air" when "the very house confess'd the difference between an Old Devote and a young Beauty" (349). The harem of Kahya's lady perpetuates the myth of oriental richness—marble fountains and pleasure gardens, decorated pavilions and ornate interiors, Persian carpets and gold-embroidered cushions—everything in fact had the

7. Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1668, p. 38.

richness of colour and texture, the dramatic visual splendour commonly associated with Eastern cultures. The sensational ingredients of the popular oriental tale, and the conventional images of enchanting mystery are placed within the parameters of immediate rather than literary experience : "I did not think all Nature could have furnish'd such a scene of Beauty" (351).

Lady Mary perceives the oriental woman somewhat objectively as a work of art. The Turkish beauty is conceptualized as a classical figurine to be admired for her grace and proportion :

I rather think it Virtue to be able to admire without any mixture of desire or Envy. The Gravest writers have spoke with great Warmth of some celebrated Pictures and statues. The Workmanship of Heaven certainly excells all our weak imitations, and I think has a much better claim to our Praise. For me, I am not asham'd to own I took more pleasure in looking on the beauteous Fatima than the finest piece of Sculpture could have given me. (351)

In most accounts, the Turkish beauty is constructed as an object of man's pleasure and lust ; she is even seen as voluptuous and sensual, eager only to ensnare men. In the Seraglio "an army of Virgins make it the only study and business of their life to obtain the single nod of invitation to the bed of the great Master." Their entire education of learning to sew, embroider, dance, sing and converse was geared towards "acquiring a handsome air in their carriage and comportment, to which they are most diligent and intent, as that which opens the door of the sultans affections, and introduces them into Preferment and Esteem."⁸

Lady Mary is struck dumb with admiration and wonder when she sees Fatima and exclaims rapturously :

That surprizing Harmony of features! That charming result of the whole! That exact proportion of Body! That lovely bloom of Complexion unsully'd by art! The unutterable Enchantment of her Smile! But her Eyes! Large and black with all the soft languishment of the bleu! Every turn of her face discovering some new charm. (350)

In such a portrayal the empirical discourse counters the oriental stereotype by conferring on the object the impersonality of art.

Paul Rychaut, in the Preface to his volume sets out to correct some of the grave errors and mistakes made by casual travellers "who are forced to content themselves with a superficial knowledge." His effort was "to

8. Ibid., p. 39

penetrate farther into the Mysteries of this Politie, which appear so strange and barbarous to us..." The term barbarous is explained to signify things "which are differenced from us by diversity of Manners and Custom, and are not dressed in the mode and fashion of our times and Countries ; for we contract prejudice from ignorance and want of familiarity."⁹

Lady Mary confirms this view when she remarks that "the manners of Mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage Writers would make us believe..." (329-30) The Near Orient was not necessarily the complementary opposite of the West.

With the clear, unprejudiced vision of an empirical observer she can find something refined in the features and bearing of the Turkish woman, Fatima. She believes that "could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite Throne of Europe, nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a Queen, though educated in a Country we call barbarous" (350).

While other social historians speak of the haughtiness and pride of these Turkish women, their idleness and viciousness, Lady Mary is witness to their innate politeness, wit and civility. She does not report any of the intrigues within the Seraglio, nor does she elaborate on the position and treatment of the numerous slaves. During her visit to the Bagnio in Sophia, she was impressed by the courtesy with which she was treated :

I was in my travelling Habit, which is a rideing dress, and certainly appear'd very extraordinary to them, yet there was not one of 'em that shew'd the least surprize or impertinent Curiosity, but receive'd me with all the obliging civility possible. I know no European Court where the Ladys would have behav'd themselves in so polite a manner to a stranger. I believe in the whole there were 200 Women and yet none of those disdainful smiles or satyric whispers that never fail in our assemblys when anybody appears that is not dressed exactly in fashion. (313)

This critique of Western manners reinforces the Enlightenment vision that tried to interpret the Orient without partiality or prejudice. It was assumed that if one perceived and experienced the Orient through an empirical encounter, it would automatically displace inherited notions.

In these *Letters* the writer persistently argues for a perception that is empirically justified. Yet the frequent references to works of art created a frame that paradoxically distances the immediacy of the experience. The sensuous description of the "fine Women naked in different postures, some

9. Ibid., Preface.

in conversation, some working, others drinking Coffee or sherbet, and many negligently lying on their cushions while their Slaves (generally pritty Girls of 17 or 18) were employ'd in braiding their hair..." inspired the neo-classical artist Ingres to paint the famous *Le Bain Turc* (1862).¹⁰ The portrayal afforded readers a voyeuristic pleasure, the warmth of experience is aesthetically conditioned and placed within the impersonal context of art :

They walk'd and mov'd with the same majestic Grace which Milton describes of our General Mother...There were many amongst them as exactly proportion'd as ever any Goddess was drawn by the pencil of Guido or Titian...(313-14)

The scene is novel because all previous descriptions could only be conjectures or hearsay as "it is a capital crime for any Man, of whatsoever religion or quality he be, to enter into the Bagnio where the Women are."¹¹

This pleasure in recognising "versions of a previously known thing" creates what Edward Said¹² calls "a new median category." While placing experience in this category "one tends to stop judging things" because one starts enjoying it. Lady Mary may have begun her narration in the scientific spirit of contributing to existing knowledge about Turkey and verifying some of the available information. What she has actually done is to have identified herself completely with travellers, so that it left her some space for incorporating the emotional impact of encountering the strange and curious :

We Travellers are in very hard circumstances. If we say nothing but what has been said before us, we are dull and we have observ'd nothing. If we tell anything new, we are laugh'd at as fabulous and Romantic, not allowing for the difference of ranks, which afford difference of company, more Curiosity, or the changes of customs that happen every 20 year in every country. But people judge of Travellers exactly with the same Candour, good Nature, and impartiality they judge of their neighbours upon all Occasions. (385)

It is not the burden of restructuring the Levant, but the pleasure of initiating a cross-cultural dialogue that emerges as the foremost aspect of this travel-text. This encounter between dissimilar cultures liberated the individual from the tyranny of accepted social mores and conventional representations. For Lady Mary the journey into the Levant was a liberating experience in more than one sense. She tries to find a balance between the rationalism of the West and the sensuality of the East :

10. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867).

11. Thevenot, Chapter XXIII, p. 32.

12. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 58.

These people are not so unpolish'd as we represent them. 'Tis True their Magnificence is of a different taste from ours. and perhaps of a better. I am allmost of opinion they have a right notion of life ; while they consume it in Music, Gardens, Wine, and delicate eating, while we are tormenting our brains with some Scheme of Politics or studying some Science to which we can never attain, or if we do, cannot persuade people to set that value upon it we do ourselves...I allow you to laugh at me for the sensual declaration that I had rather be a rich Effendi with all his ignorance than Sir Isaac Newton with all his knowledge. (414-15)

For a woman, "not very apt to believe in Wonders", (369) this is a strange submission.

NOTES

1

All references to *The Embassy Letters* are from *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu Volume I* (1708-1720) edited by Robert Halsband, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, reprint 1980. Quotations from this primary text are followed by the page numbers of this edition.

THE REAL HOUSE OF USHER

Nandana Dutta

THERE are figuratively three houses of Usher - one that the narrator enters to participate in the events that subsequently take place ; a second that he imperfectly 'remembers' as he looks back over the past ; and a third that he reconstructs from events participated in and imperfectly remembered. Is there a 'real' house of Usher? or a memory—thought out? The narrator has been to the house. But there is no actual proof of his experience except that he is talking about it. How reliable is the reality of a story if the narrator is motivated by the need to tell a well-put-together but not real tale, particularly to a readership with probable expectations from Poe's trenchant declaration that "the vital requisite of all works of Art" is "Unity" - a quality defined as "totality of effect or impression" ('The Poetic Principle' : 198).

Poe made no attempt to disguise his awareness of the artificially contrived effect, whether through explicit admissions in the theory or implicitly in the tales. Unfortunately, critics of Poe, and especially of 'The House of Usher' have often been carried away by the authority of his theoretical statements and allowed themselves to believe that the perfect tale was what Poe always tried to achieve, failed most of the time, but did leave a few examples like 'The House of Usher' where he got close to the ideal. Before proceeding to the house perhaps we could take another look at some of Poe's own statements.

"In the tale proper...mere **construction** is of course...imperatively demanded (*Marginalia* : 456). Again, "The clay is...the slave of the artist" (*Marginalia* : 357). "In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design" ('Review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*' : 216). Further, "In the construction of *plot* ... we should aim at so arranging the incidents that we shall not be able to determine, of any one of them, whether it depends from any one other or upholds it. The plots of God are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God."¹ ('Eureka' : 177).

-
1. The distinction between *plot* and *incidents* is worthy of renewed attention. It seems logical to read back Russian Formalist categories of the **fabliau** (translated as fable or story) and **sjuzet** (subject, plot or discourse) into Poe's critical awareness of this distinction. These lines look like a cosmology which influenced a critical range from Beebe to Ketterer.

Each of these statements assumes a creator who is outside and 'above' the work, an organizing intellect which powers disparate elements into unity. They reveal his abiding concern with the artist's effort at putting together a perfect whole, along with his realization that such an effort can only try to achieve the ideal.

It would be natural to assume that the tales are always referring to an external metanarrative made up of Poe's own professed beliefs. Hence critical statements like the following :

'The Fall of the House of Usher', many critics have found is a nearly perfect illustration of Poe's theory of totality. That there are no collateral lines of the Usher family, that the name 'House of Usher' signifies to its neighbors both the mansion and the family, that there is a barely perceptible crack running from roof to base of the house, that Roderick Usher has a particularly acute sense of hearing - all such details contribute to the single effect of the story and play a part in the final catastrophe. (Beebe : 123)

Or in a mode characteristic of appraisals of the narrator, "Poe presides with precision of perception at the psychological drama he describes" (Gargano : 167) - inevitably suggestive of the controlled intellect revealing the delusions of the participant narrator.

These are symptomatic of the 'masterly' cooption of Poe's many explicit declarations about the ideal unity of a work of art, in order to explain the tales as perfect or to-be-perfect approximations of the theory, ironing out thereby the anti-monolithic crinkles that Poe left, deliberately or unconsciously, in the body of the tales.

The tales, many of which are told by narrators who are outside the fictional world at the moment of telling, cannot be read merely as illustrations of his aesthetic theory. 'The Fall of the House of Usher' is an apt instrument to mount a critique against the totalizing tendencies of much traditional criticism of Poe, first because it has been harnessed to display the ideal "unity of effect" ; but more significantly, it is what might be labelled a "metaphor of its own narration" (Dupuy, 505), containing in its texture disruptive elements (the narrator, and the fissure, remembrance, and hearsay, which are all displayed as problems of narration), that call attention to itself as a self-reflexive artefact.

Poe has been led down wildly exciting paths, with Riddel claiming that the poststructuralist questioning of presence begins with Poe. This while welcome to a Poe aficionado, seems just a trifle far-fetched, unless of course the scope of this claim is widened to include the fact that the questioning of presence begins with Romanticism. Irwin evokes Poe's deliberate

misleading of the reader : "whether in its fictionality the narrative is to be understood as the story of something that is supposed to have actually happened or as an hallucination, a dream, a hoax ;" (Irwin, 118). Such readings, by problematizing the 'reality' of the story bring us very close to Poe's consciousness of fictionality. Logically therefore, self-reflexive theories of narration might seem to provide the proper tools to unravel a text whose complexity derives from its preoccupation with the nature of the narrative voice. However, instead of reflecting postmodern theory back onto Poe's work, if we can arrive back at postmodern theory through the Poe text this would be an incidental gain I find nothing to quarrel with. It might be pertinent to remind oneself here that,

instead of interpreting the great masterpieces in the light of modern theories, we must criticize modern theories in the light of these masterpieces, once their theoretical voice has become explicit. (Girard, x)

I prefer to relocate Poe's concern with presence and/or construct within the aesthetic parameters of Romanticism - European and American - specifically the Romantic dilemma of reality as presence or given and reality as construct. I like to call this a conservative estimate because I believe my take-off point is well within conventional Romanticism, and more particularly within Poe's own artistic interests. My reference to Girard does not necessarily mean that I concur with Girard's belief that 'great' literary works refer us back to the world. I believe Poe never completely resolved this problem. So that, pursuing the Poe-narrator via a self-referential theory where literature merely speaks of itself, or through the medium of traditional realism which believes that fiction has an extralinguistic reality, limits our reading of a text which holds both views in complex balance.

Poe's entry into this unresolved but richly productive area of doubt might be traced indirectly to his acquaintance with the writings of Coleridge, because of his many, very often derogatory references to Coleridge in his *Letters* and the *Marginalia*, without acknowledgement of debts. But there is proof of one large Romantic borrowing - the idea of oneness, unity, **wrought** by the artistic imagination.

II

The presence of a narrator avowedly outside the literary work is characteristic of writers like Poe, Melville and Hawthorne whose response to the Transcendentalist metanarrative is compulsively resistant. This is not the stand of the classically omniscient narrator whose vision is undisturbed because he is not involved in the events of the story. To illustrate very briefly - In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* the writer/narrator's status is established

in the preliminary 'Custom House' sketch - one who apparently merely transmits a tale already inscribed. But it is after all not the manuscript transmitted as found, but a reading of the manuscript by a man whose obsession with things as they happen interferes traitorously with the calmness and detachment of his vision. In Melville's *Moby Dick*, Ishmael the narrator at the time of narration is outside the sphere of actual events. The pace of 'real' action of the slowed-down narrative of a man at ease many years after the hectic pursuit allows him to reconstruct the adventure and make the novel. In a different exemplification of the same problem, the writer/narrator of *Billy Budd* acknowledges at the end that the story of Billy was 'made' from the bare bones found in the popular dockyard ditty 'Billy in the Darbies'.

In Emerson, Thoreau and other practitioners of two important nineteenth century American literary forms - the essay and the lecture - the omniscient *I* has an undeniable presence, authenticating what is being said. This all-seeing *I/eye* is replaced in those divergent writers who tell tales, by a narrator whose provisional status in relation to the story he is recounting, is made apparent. In Poe this *I/eye* is therefore undermined by, the words he has to use or hear used (for example, 'The Man that was Used Up'), his susceptibility to influence ('The Fall of the House of Usher'), or his engulfment within a situation where he is the victim ('The Pit and the Pendulum'). In each case the narrator's reordering of events for that much desired *Poetic* unity of effect fails to hide the seams. Before I proceed, however inadequately, to reveal the 'seams' it is imperative to get the rhetoric of unity out of the way. A destructive principle of oneness has operated in the minds of most critics of 'The House of Usher'. Beebe and Gargano have already been quoted in an earlier context. Thomas Woodson suggests that "Poe presents really only one character, of which Roderick Usher, Madeline, the narrator - and the House - are different aspects" (Woodson : 18). And "there are no seams, bastings, or other interfering reminders of its being artificially put together" (Abel : 55).

This brings me very conveniently to the point that is 'central' to this reading. The narrator is the most "interfering reminder" of artistic contrivance. I propose to harness here a comment which was obviously made with a different explicatory purpose in mind. Wayne Booth in his influential study of fiction, ascribes the "fully integrated mood-building" of 'The House of Usher' to "a character who experiences the rhetoric in his own person" (Booth : 201) In other words the tale is given its unity by the narrator, and, if I may squeeze a little more out of this statement, by the fact that the events of the story are now constituents of the narrator's mind, to be organized, colored and presented. Todorov helps this idea :

The tenor of each piece of information is determined by the person who transmits it ; no observation exists without an

observer ; the author cannot, by definition be omniscient.
(Todorov : 161).

S/he may aim at unity. S/he need not necessarily succeed.

III

A perceptive critic of Poe acknowledges the complex role of the narrator :

Since in a narrative, the certainty of our knowledge seems to rest on the credibility of the narrator, putting the latter in question puts the former in question, thereby directing our attention to the coincidence between the limits of knowledge and the limits of written discourse. The inability of the mind to test its knowledge by any other apparatus than that by which the knowledge was acquired, the question of whether the world has a substantial existence apart from the mind or is simply an illusion becomes in Poe's narratives the reader's inability to verify the truth of what the narrator says (since the narrator is the sole source of information) ... (Irwin : 117)

The narrator, far from being a cohesive factor is a subversive element which destroys the unity, or questions the possibility of unity of a literary work. In 'The Fall of the House of Usher' his presence and his implicit acknowledgement that the materials of his story are not entirely within his grasp, that they elude his control, throw into question the fact of presence, the 'reality' of the story. The ingredients of his narrative mode - **retelling** which implies control, and **remembrance** which is obviously imperfect because of its dependence on seeing at the time of action, when he is not an impartial observer - militate against one another. Poe evidently realized what the Russians called the distinction between the story/fabliau and plot/sjuzet, for in tale after tale we have narrators who are conscious of the problems involved in telling these tales, especially the effect of temporality which defeats simultaneous apprehension and expression. 'The House of Usher' (like many of Poe's other tales) is about writing - about representation or construction - since the narrator's status at the moment of telling is indistinguishable from that of the writer. The writer/narrator foregrounds his inadequate, incomplete seeing, his dependence on memory consistently asserted as trustworthy, his complete subjection to influence whether exerted by his immediate surroundings or by his host, and the fact that for the climactic event in the tale - Madeline's death - he has only Roderick's word.

'The Fall of the House of Usher' starts off with the impression that it is a straightforward narrative, the narrator approaching the house and noting its perfect coincidence with its setting. At this point an overt sense of perspective intrudes :

It was possible I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression. (398)

Is this a man who is just about to enter, or who is intent on proper "arrangement" to present the story effectively? The next step is naturally a "different arrangement" - the duplication of the house and its environs in the stagnant waters of the tarn - a compounding of the effect of gloom and the terminal point for this unit of the narrative.

The terminal situation in a literary work has an overwhelming effect on the mind of the reader, unwittingly determining the attitude to the 'whole'. Coupled with the natural quest of the mind for integration, we have a combination against which the disruptive individual elements must put up tough resistance if they are to stand up and be counted. In this tale Poe practises the devious method of presenting a temporary, ad-hoc point of vision and following it up with an absorption in a generally unified effect, leading finally to the dissolution of the house and its engulfment by the waters of the tarn. A critic impressed by this final impact must of necessity put the seal of complacent finality on his reading : "The tale is about the collapse into oneness of the universe from its present state of dispersed heterogeneity and deception" (Ketterer : 195).

However, with all the traces that Poe leaves throughout the tale, of a unity carefully imposed on the disparate materials of the 'actual' scene, it is difficult to take this effect as absolute or final. The angle of viewing is constantly and seductively floated across the reader's sights like a red herring. After the neatly achieved sense of gloom - the correspondence between what is present and what is seen - the narrator's distance from the house shows him that "No portion of the masonry had fallen ; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones" (400). The coming ruin in the individual stones is apparent only when the viewer is close to the house. Before that, the structure seemed sound and whole just as the narrator's distance from the story lends it wholeness, even if it is a qualified wholeness.

In a similar fashion :

Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure which extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn. (400)

This fissure has been variously read as "an inert symbol of Usher's split personality" (Gordon and Tate : 29), and as foreseeing the "collapse into

oneness" at the end. The fissure embossing itself on the narrator's vision resists efforts to unify the picture.

In Poe's deliberate exposure of the artist's inability to successfully organize the diverse features into one self-sufficient entity, there are three distances which determine the seeing of the fissure. The impression of wholeness at one distance reveals itself as imperfect when the fissure shows up at the next point of vision. So the writer/narrator enters to the third vantage point within the house and the crack ceases to manifest itself. The vision of unity is dependent on point of view. The viewer has to be positioned at a certain distance from the object to see it whole, its constituent parts harmoniously subdued to the overall effect. As soon as he enters this clarity of vision is lost : "the eye however, struggled in vain to reach the remote angles of the chamber ..." (401). The already colored immediate surroundings impinge on the consciousness, clouding perception, implying that what he sees now is not really what is there. His problems pile up as, determined to use everything within the story to communicate the effect of sorrow, gloom and coming disaster, he will now not even allow objects familiar to him since childhood keep their 'objectivity' : "I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up" (400-401). This narrator within the story is an unsatisfactory witness to events as they might or might not have happened, because his visual capacities are suspect, taking on autonomous powers which are beyond rational control.²

As 'The House of Usher' shows us, seeing is 'basic' to an interpretation which considers the writer/narrator's process - particularly a fissured, interrupted seeing into which one would categorize memory or remembrance. The element of memory is forcefully reiterated to compel the reader's acquiescence in the building of the house : "The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered" (406) : "I well remember..." (408). And in a revealing paragraph :

I shall *ever bear about me a memory* of the many solemn hours I thus spent with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly tempered ideality threw a sulphurous lustre over all. His

-
2. Elsewhere Poe has carried the eye's volitional ability beyond normally accepted bounds, especially in the grotesquely distorted reality of 'The Psyche Zenobia', the exemplary inset narrative of 'How to Write a Blackwood Article' - the eye detaching itself from its socket but retaining its power to see and influence the other eye.

long improvised dirges *will ring forever* in my ears ... *I hold painfully in mind* a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. (405 ; emphases mine).

His assertion of a perfect remembrance cannot conceal the fact that distance throws a veil, a "sulphurous lustre", over whatever happened. This insistence is evidence of doubt as well suggestive of another problem (dealt with later in the paper) which is illustrated in Poe's use of the other shaky device - the narrator's vision. Nevertheless, the highlighting of memory functions as a mode to place the narrator. His deictic interpolations place him outside the story at crucial points in the narrative.³ He talks of the enshrouded building (412). How is the person inside the house able to distinguish the shroud? A complex balance is therefore achieved of a person both inside and outside, an issue that no artist can ignore.

The narrator 'remembers' his subjection to the influence of the place and of Usher. When Roderick Usher recounts the unnatural sensations which accompany his malady - "some of these as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me, although perhaps *the terms and the general manner of the narration had their weight*" (403 ; emphasis mine) - this is also an admission of the narrator's consciousness of textuality. His susceptibility to the magnetism of Roderick's personality makes him take Roderick's words when "Usher informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more", in spite of the blush upon the bosom and the face (409-410) - creating a situation which is analogous to the reader's dependence on hearsay for the story. If the narrator is an inside witness, he is so completely engulfed that he is unreliable. If he is telling the tale from the outside, then the materials are so completely at the mercy of both his memory and his motive that he is once again unreliable.

The assured, authoritative voice of the narrator is a cover for a plaintive plea for belief - the foregrounding of the writer's conviction that the reader has to be persuaded into belief - that there is after all only a text, a lie that has to be bolstered. The Poe-text, far from accentuating its wholeness, is terribly fractured by the author/narrator's insinuations of mendacity. To use Ricardou's dramatic levels of textual revelation, at the first stage the text lies ; at the second the text admits to having lied ; at the third it makes clear that it is a text (26-43). At the end of the tale, when the narrator runs away from the House of Usher, he ceases to be a responsible witness. He tacitly admits that the only evidence of truth is

3. There is hardly any space for quoting and illustrating such deictics. But my point is that stretching the idea of deixis to include all modes of positioning a speaker in time and space, the persistent "I remember" could be labelled deictic.

the linguistic evidence of the tale constructed from remembered events. What finally remains is the text, a signifier, but the signified, the extra-linguistic reality, separately now exists only in the narrator's mind, its shape can only be a factor of the mind, and it can have no other mode of survival beyond that of articulation.

* * *

I had earlier contended that Poe could not resolve the given-construct dilemma. Concluding a reading of 'The House of Usher' on this note would be tantamount to suggesting that I have finally and satisfactorily 'proved' that Poe believed reality to be a construct. I wish to suggest nothing of the kind I would like to take a slightly tangential route at this point and raise a couple of issues which while not *directly* related to the concerns of this paper might nevertheless re-focus and redeem this irresolution.

The first issue : Why does Poe use a narrator in *so many of his tales*, and highlight the problem of narration *again and again*? Since the point here is not so much the narrator as the fact of using the same technique and thereby repeatedly confronting the same issue, I have relegated it to the periphery of this paper. In his study of the writer's effort to defer death through his writing, the French theorist Maurice Blanchot discussed the distinction between *book* and *work* - the individual pieces or books constituting the *work*. In his own words :

of the work ... he (the writer) never grasps anything but the substitute - the approach and the illusion in the form of the book ... the writer belongs to the work but what belongs to him is only a book ... The writer ... believes only that the work is unfinished and he thinks that a little more effort ... will permit him and him alone to finish it (22-23)⁴

I am of course 'misreading' Blanchot to concentrate on the idea of deferral that is behind his suggestion of the writer's need to write again and again. Even if the particulars differ, the writer by going on with the task continues in his obsession. Poe's narrators may differ in individual details and in their roles in different stories, but the problem of the narrator's position and what he is talking about never does get solved. If he finds an answer, in Blanchot's terms the writer will, for all creative purposes, be dead. Hence a long series of tales where the writer/narrator's self is pushed to the surface for readers to 'see'.

4. I admit that I am guilty of interpreting this to suit my purpose. In keeping with my intention that I would not read theory back onto the text, I am trying to imply that Poe is prioritized, Blanchot merely providing the 'jargon'.

The second issue : I have claimed that Poe was resisting Transcendentalist literary dictatorship. Here I will specify this as the Transcendentalist diktat for the representation of an American reality. Poe responded negatively to this great body of advice (incorporated especially in Emerson's 'The American Scholar', 'The Poet', 'Self Reliance' etc ...). He never represented such a reality, a recalcitrance which led to his long exile from the 'canon' of nineteenth century American literature. In fact he went to the other extreme and filled his tales with a variety of fevered, excited, sometimes drug-induced fantasies. In conjuring up fantasy or a manufactured reality, what was he trying to prove? If he was so sensitive to the dominant voice and its 'will to power' that he had to adopt a radical yet revisionary stand, then why did one version of his response become his authoritarian theory of the short story?

We have before us now, the transcendentalist metanarrative, the *Poetic* metanarrative, and the particularized metanarrative of the teller of each tale. Can these be reconciled into one grand theory of writing? I'd suggest that the *Poetic* metanarrative echoed the Transcendentalist one in valorizing the quality of unity or oneness, but was severely and quite deliberately undercut by the individual metanarrative of each tale functioning in relation to this theory as a mischievous "devil in the belfry" or an "imp of the perverse". The *Poetic* theory, set up as a shield to counter the Emersonian theory of literature, proved a convenient blind behind which the subversive mind of Poe could 'play'. The concept of the **metanarrative** as used by Foucault in his critiques of Western philosophy and by Lyotard in his reading of the postmodern condition, is inseparable from notions of power. Poe set up two kinds of metanarrative - one which by itself seemed whole and unironic ; the other that of the narrator, the texture of whose discourse is variously fissured and which is therefore also a comment on the former ; both together working as a device to resist cooption.

The construction of a reality for the duration of each tale, seen in the light of such intentions, naturally brings back into focus his creative doubts about a permanent 'given' reality and its representation, Symbolically, the waters of the tarn then close not just over the House of Usher (building and family) but also over the 'House of Usher' (the tale), suggesting that a veil, film or shroud, obstructing visibility, stands between the reader and the 'real' House of Usher.

WORKS CITED

- Abel, Darrel. "A Key to the House of Usher". **Critical Essays**. Woodson 43-55.
- Beebe, Maurice. "The Universe of Roderick Usher". **Critical Essays**. Regan 121-133.
- Blanchot, Maurice. **L'Espace Littéraire**. trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1982.
- Booth, Wayne C. **The Rhetoric of Fiction**. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Dupuy, Jean Pierre. "Self Reference in Literature". **Poetics** 18 (1989) : 491-515.
- Gargano, James W. "The Question of Poe's Narrators". **Critical Essays**. Regan 164-171.
- Girard, Rene. **To Double Business Bound**. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Gordon, Caroline and Allen Tate. **The House of Fiction**. New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.
- Irwin, John T. **American Hieroglyphics : The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance**. New Haven : Yale UP, 1980.
- Kennedy, J. Gerald. **Poe, Death, and the Life of Writing**. New Haven : Yale UP, 1987.
- Ketterer, David. **The Rationale of Deception in Poe**. Baton Rouge and London : Louisiana State UP, 1979.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "Eureka". **The Works of Edgar Allan Poe**. Ed. John H. Ingram. 4 vols. London : A & C Black Ltd., 1899. 3 : 91-195.
- "The Fall of the House of Usher". **Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe**. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott. 3 vols. Cambridge : Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1978. 2 : 397-417.
- "Marginalia". **Works**. Ingram. 3 : 347-479.
- "The Poetic Principle". **Works**. Ingram. 3 : 197-219.
- "Review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*". **Works**. Ingram. 4 : 213-227.
- Regan, Robert, ed. **Poe : A Collection of Critical Essays**. New Jersey : Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967.

- Ricardou, Jean. **Problemes du nouveau roman**. Paris : Seuil, 1967.
- Riddel, Joseph N. "The 'Crypt' of Edgar Poe". **Boundary 2** 8(1979) : 117-144.
- Todorov, Tzvetan, "The Typology of Detective Fiction". **Modern Criticism and Theory : A Reader**. Ed. David Lodge. London and New York : Longman Inc., 1988. 158-165.
- Woodson, Thomas, ed. **The Fall of the House of Usher : A Collection of Critical Essays**. New Jersey : Prentice Hall Inc., 1969.

A PROTEST AND A QUEST : A STUDY OF SHAW'S POLITICAL VISION IN THE APPLE CART

Goutam Sengupta

FOR the critic who desires to probe into the nature of Shaw's responses to the political issues of his time as embodied in his drama, *The Apple Cart* (1928) remains crucially important. But it is not an idiosyncratic choice. The fact remains that Shaw never chose to write directly on forms of government till *The Apple Cart*, though in major plays he brought in for scrutiny the defects of the political system operating in the bourgeois society of his time. In this play his impulse for protest is merged centrally with his successful quest for a better alternative.

David Ian Paley, in his introduction to *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century*, asserts that all theatre is basically political, each individual play having taken a distinctive ideological position. His endorsement of Roger Hudson's position becomes more meaningful in relation to Shaw's attempt to render drama into a critique of the values and political forms operating in bourgeois society, the words of Roger Hudson being that if a play does not criticize the political and social system of the country it is in fact supporting it and indirectly (or directly) propagandizing for its continued acceptance as the way things should be.¹

That was never Shaw's intention. In fact in all his major plays beginning from *Plays Unpleasant*, he consistently strove to question the validity of the premises of the bourgeois social order. His case is more interesting because he was the able supporter and theoretician of a political group very conscious of the contradictions of bourgeois society but genuinely interested in proceeding towards amelioration through the route of parliamentary democracy. The major plays he wrote upto *The Apple Cart* always remain political in the sense that they have always questioned the status quo, always proposing ironic indictment of the accepted norms, though the alternatives proposed are not always very concretized and sometimes remain even ambivalent.

Basically and formally Shaw remained entrenched within the Fabian spirit of compromise with the bourgeois social order and favoured permeation of the existing democratic form of government by socialist ideas. Detailed analysis of some of the seminal tracts and reports drafted by Shaw will

show how he, during a particular period of his life, clung to the illusion that something meaningful could be achieved socially along the Fabian path. As years passed by, however, the possibility seemed remote : by 1922 Shaw withdrew himself from the executive of the party, had witnessed the First World War and felt increasingly aware of the futility of bourgeois democracy. The genuineness of the impetus of questioning the bourgeois social order that he carried with him from his early days not only remained valid; the capacity to doubt it honestly now reached the ability to think about the very political form of the state.

Thus, though the major plays he had written till the 1920s had always had a deep political undertone, he perhaps felt it an urgent task to question the basic nature of bourgeois democracy itself. That sense of urgency seems to have compelled him to write *The Apple Cart*. Till date, no contemporary dramatist had written a political extravaganza. Instead of avoiding or confusing issues, he brought political questions directly to the arena of society drama, an achievement worthy of a socialist. More interesting, even the agenda of the Fabian Socialists was submitted to close scrutiny in dramatic terms.

The composition of a play that projects bourgeois democracy and the Monarch as opposed forces seems striking enough from one who had remained very deeply associated with a society which was an active force in parliamentary democracy. The Fabian Society had never desired to demolish the democratic state. While it wished all instruments of production to be owned by the state and managed by experts, it had profound respect for the set-up of democracy in advanced western countries, viz. the election process and the functioning of the government through parliament at the highest level and through municipal borough committees at the lowest level (at one time Shaw himself was elected councillor and functioned very actively through the democratic process.)

While the Fabian Tract No. 2 (*A Manifesto*) repeatedly stresses the need for the state to compete with the private individual in every department of production, it criticizes the democratic government too. 'That the established Government has no more right to call itself the State than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather.'² But there is nothing to assume that the Fabians wanted to destroy the democratic machinery. On the other hand, there are numberless examples of not only explicit support for democracy but also instances of opportunistic class compromise which is so characteristic of bourgeois democracy. While Tract No. 3. (1885) issues a rigorous warning to all "provident Landlords and Capitalists", it contains an important footnote too, which urges that the radical workmen and the socialist demagogues may misunderstand it, since "they are but too apt

to conclude that schemes favourable to landlords cannot be permanently advantageous to the working class."³ The tract aims at urging all members of the proprietary class to work for their own living and recommends that they should support all undertakings for the parcelling out of waste and inferior lands among the labouring class. Thus there is displayed not only an elitist attempt at amelioration of social ills, but also a concession to the illusion generated by bourgeois democracy that class harmony, instead of class conflict, was possible and attainable in an exploitation-based society. The Fabians were aware of the loopholes of the party system, but they issued tracts supporting the need for a new party of the working class (the Labour Party) for the General Elections of 1892. Tract 40 (1892) and Tract 49 (1894), entitled *The Fabian Election Manifesto* and *A Plan of Campaign for Labour* respectively, bitterly criticized the achievements of both conservatives and Liberals and stressed the need for a radical point of view that could initiate an overhauling of the "outrageously unjust system of distributing the wealth of the country"⁴ (Tract 40, 1892), but positively within the election-oriented party-based democratic system. In Tract 49, with the title *A Plan of Campaign for Labour* (1894), issued after the General Elections, Shaw put forward a proposal to send fifty working class men, financed by the Trade Unions, to Parliament in order to look after the interests of the working-class (in effect a plea for an Independent Labour Party). At this stage Shaw is therefore quite obviously hopeful about democracy as a political forum and believed that it only needed 'permeation' (to use a favourite Fabian catch phrase) by radical socialist ideas that are linked to a more equitable distribution of social wealth.

The Report of the Fabian Policy (Tract 70, July 1896) reveals quite obviously the Fabian attitude to democracy. The society dislikes all sorts of referendum or direct popular decision. In the opinion of the Society democracy stood for simply "the control of the administration by freely elected representatives of the people." The bourgeois illusion in free and fair elections in a class-ridden society is only too apparent. In its opinion if the British parliamentary system of the day could get rid of the veto of the House of Lords and could be thrown open to candidates from all classes, it would become a first-rate practical manifestation of democratic government. The same tract quite significantly emphasizes that "in a democratic community compromise is a necessary condition of political progress."⁵ The statement is a seminal one, revealing the essentially Fabian point. Instead of believing in the essential conflict among different social classes, the Society believed in class harmony and mutual co-operation. To them (and it must be remembered that at that time Shaw, as an executive member, was one of the policymakers) the concept of free and fair democracy seemed potent enough with regard to the amelioration of social

misery. It may therefore fairly be said that Shaw at this period retained much hope in bourgeois democracy, though severe limitations imposed by the upper classes hampered its implementation. Shaw's essay on the economic basis of socialism clearly proves how much the Fabians were influenced by the utilitarian ideal of 'the greatest good for the greatest number'. The Benthamite and Millite proposition was only too attractive for Webb, Shaw and the other Fabians; but they sought to realize the ideal through communal use of the resources of production through the machinery of the democratic state. The Fabians placed their trust in the organic growth of society toward socialism; but to them it was evolutionary and gradual and not based on catastrophic overthrow of the capitalist machinery of exploitation. Thus, though they were acutely pained by economic (and consequently social) inequality, they wanted the remedy through democratic and perfectly constitutional means. In *Essays in Fabian Socialism*, which is a valuable document of the early Fabian beliefs, Shaw adds his admiration for the democratic path of social progress towards socialism : "You cannot convince any man that it is impossible to tear down a government in a day... but everybody is convinced already that you cannot convert first and third class carriages into second class; rookeries and palaces into comfortable dwellings ... merely by singing the "Marseillaise".⁶ Thus the Fabian point of view ignored the Marxist theory of class war leading to violent overthrow of the ruling bourgeoisie and the consequent coming-in of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Margaret Cole aptly characterizes the Fabian (and Shawian) reverence for democracy : "They were democratic, in the sense : that they believed that democracy would be the political agent of socialism, that the central machinery of the state would eventually be captured by democratic forces and the socialized production would be democratically run".⁷ It can be inferred that Shaw at this early period of his dramatic career was deeply influenced and inspired by the concept that democracy would be the agent of socialism. In other words, the democratic conversion of the country into socialism remained his main hope; in the plays of the early period he exposed different social abuses, both environmental and moral, the recognition of which, he hoped, would help in bringing about such conversion.

Shaw has himself continually thrown interesting light on the two major political forms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century—democracy and dictatorship. Besides *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, Shaw wrote numerous important articles for radical periodicals and delivered lectures on various aspects of socialist politics. A sample survey of these opinions would show the whole spectrum of his political viewpoint, even outside officially published Fabian tracts and policy reports.

At the end of one such article, originally written for the German newspaper *Vorwärts* (Labour Day issue, dated 1 May 1906) Shaw explicitly

states his position vis-a-vis the democratic state; he is aware both of the misuse of the democratic state by capitalism and of the possibility of making it all powerful as a panacea against the ills of capitalism. "For we are essentially State-Socialists, aiming at the rescue of state socialism from its present exploitation and restriction by capitalism".⁸ In the same article Shaw makes it clear that though he admired Marx's acute analysis of Capitalist exploitation, he hardly accepted his theory of class war leading to the dissolution of the democratic state in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat : "Karl Marx, by his demonstration of the industrial basis of political history, made it impossible for the younger generations to tolerate such superstitions as his class war of a heroic proletariat against a villainous bourgeoisie... To him, the whole world consisted of himself and Engels, surrounded by an invisible angelic choir called the proletariat ...".⁹ In the report of the public address delivered before the Political and Economic Circle of the National Liberal Club (1 May 1913 i.e. quite late in his career) Shaw underlined the way in which the working class could get a fair redistribution of wealth through the democratically-elected Parliament :

The working classes have been using their power, at first indirectly, and of late years directly through the Labour party in Parliament, to effect a redistribution...instead of getting money, the working classes got municipal dwellings ; they got education ; they got sanitation ; they got the clearing away of slum areas and this mass of municipal work was largely paid for by rating richer people than themselves...

Thus they were deliberately transferring wealth from one class to another by parliamentary power. They were redistributing part of the national income, and diverting it in their own direction.¹⁰ The above extract clearly shows how deeply Shaw was convinced, even till the middle of his career, about the perfect viability of the democratic machinery for ameliorating social inequality.

However, there was a growing sense of disenchantment within his political vision ; with the progress of the century he withdrew more and more from public participation in the path of parliamentary democracy and was perhaps brooding over its failure. The seeds of the later belief in the capacity of the well-meaning autocrat in producing effective socio-political changes are seen even in a 1921 article. "Revolutionary changes are usually the work of autocrats",¹¹ he says, and then cites Peter the Great, Cromwell and Richelieu as bringing in better social orders through autocratic action, considering them far above the utility of democracy : "A modern democratic electorate would have swept all three out of power and replaced them by those who, even if they had wanted to, would not have dared to suggest any vital change in the established social order."¹²

It is obvious that by the 1920s Shaw was beginning to get disillusioned about the beneficial prospects of bourgeois democracy. In such a perspective he wrote and published *The Intelligent Woman's Guide* (1928) where Fascism was discussed in a separate section. In it he excoriates the party system, so vital to democracy, as being detrimental to the working capacity of the parliament : ".....how under William III the imposition of the party system of Parliament made the House of Commons a mere club for the discussions and intrigues of the ins and outs..."¹³ It is strange to notice how Shaw endorses the violation of democratic principles by the dictator :

Such proceedings scandalize the liberals, who raise a great ballyhoo against them as infringements of all liberal principles of liberty, democracy ...private property and private enterprise on which their capitalism is founded, It is therefore important to bear in mind that nothing could be more democratic than the organization of the great mass of the people and they carrying out of their ideas of how public work should be done : that is, by superior persons exercising coercive authority to the complete exclusion of "the lower classes".¹⁴

It is fairly obvious that Shaw gradually felt inclined toward a complete approbation of the work of Fascist dictators. In the meantime Shaw continued to underline the democratic ideal in some of his major plays. In *Man and Superman* (1903), when Ann proposes that Tanner should enter the Parliament, he collapses like a pricked bladder (2 : 553; Act 2). This is a corroboration of his views stated in *The Revolutionist's Handbook* which maintains : "Democracy cannot rise above the level of the human material of which its voters are made "(2:704) There is sufficient indication to show the turn of opinion in sentences like : "To that recurrent catastrophe we shall certainly come again unless we can have a democracy of supermen' (2 : 705) In *Major Barbara* he, through Undershaft, makes everybody see through the illusions of democracy : "I am the government of your country..... You will make war when it suits us and keep peace when it doesn't (1 : 416 : Act 3).

By the time Shaw composed *The Apple Cart* his exasperation with the functioning of democracy in England was complete. He could very rightly denounce the dilly-dallying, wavering (and thereby quite ineffective) parliamentary procedures that were totally incapable of running the state machinery to any satisfying extent. He categorically states in the Preface : "Our present parliament is obsolete : it can do no more the work of a modern state than Julius Caesar's galley could do the work of an Atlantic liner" (4 : 226) He suggests : "We need in these islands two or three additional federal legislatures", and soon adds, significantly : "We need a central authority to coordinate the federal work" (4 : 226) To his mind the solution lies in the activation of the powers of the monarch, who is visualized

by the him as wise, efficient and dignified—an embodiment of the virtues crystallized in the Fabian ‘expert’ or civil servant—in whose favour all the obstructive functions of our political machinery must be ruthlessly scrapped. “All the pseudo-democratic obstructive functions of our political machinery must be ruthlessly scrapped and the general problem of government approached from a positive viewpoint ...” (4 : 226)

Right through the Preface Shaw conceives of popular movements as simply a meaningless affair leading to no positive goal. On the other hand he is wholly convinced about the futility of the Parliament’s abilities and the need to evolve systems to avert dictatorship, but the route remains unexplored : “When we see Parliaments like ours kicked into the gutter by dictators.... the only sane course is to take the step by which the dictatorship could have been anticipated and averted, and construct a political system for rapid positive work....” (4 :212)

It is to be seen how, in the play, the parliamentarians are dismissed as being wholly ineffective, and the need for a better administrator created, but in the absence of any other entity, the benevolent figure of the king looms large.

In the Preface, however, Shaw denies any favour being shown to the king. He asserts that he has attempted to show the tussle of equally equipped contenders, the king and his cabinet ministers, out of which the king comes out victorious because of his wisdom, efficiency, pragmatic tactfulness and dignified temperance. “*The Apple Cart* exposes the unreality of both democracy and royalty as our idealists conceive them” and he proceeds to show how the ministers are rendered ineffective and inert by the system, while the king has got the firsthand touch (“.....a docility which cannot be imposed on a king who works at his job”, 4 : 208). He is the more admired one. Shaw explicitly denies the charge that he has “packed the cards by making the king a wise man and the minister a fool”, in the same paragraph he admits that “as the prettier player of the two he [the king] has the sympathy of the audience”, the reasons being “his conformity to the popular ideal of dignity and perfect breeding” (4 : 209) as well as training in good manners. To his cabinet colleagues are allotted qualities like temper, tantrums, bullying, sneering, swearing, kicking. In spite of a clever attempt to impart an air of impartiality, Shaw cannot conceal the fact that the ministers belong to a very low level of culture; they get their own way by “making scenes, flying into calculated rages, and substituting vulgar abuse for argument” (4 : 209).

There is effective material for drama in the conflict, for the ministers want the king to sign an ultimatum, practically abdicating his power of royal veto, thus reducing him to almost an ‘Indiarubber stamp’, while the king emerges as the winner, carrying all the effective power with him. But the

conflict never assumes its true character, because the intellectual debate between the two parties never gets crystallized. In all Shaw's major plays the intellectual debate among men/women professing different points of view is the kernel of the play. Sometimes Shaw's preference is only too patent : it takes the form of the pragmatism of Bluntschli (in *Arms and the Man*) or remains ambivalent (Barbara-Undershaft conflict in *Major Barbara*), but there is evidently a battle of social attitudes. Shaw's technique consists in pointing out through a lively intellectual debate the deficiencies in what he considers to be the wrong point of view. Here one finds the conspicuous absence of any such intellectual tug-of war. Barring a woman, the cabinet is mostly shown to be full of hollow figures, hardly live characters at all, who do not seem to be fit contenders for the king.

From the very beginning the king shows himself an embodiment of (to use Shaw's words) the "popular ideal of dignity and perfect breeding." (The emphasis on 'dignity' and 'breeding' is important.) He is ever ready verbally to concede what the immature and always tense, almost neurotic, Prime Minister Boanerges says (in verbal deeds there is only a show of energy on his part—a vague show—that comes to nothing and is self-consuming). When he warns the king that "this country has got to be governed, not by you, but your Minister" (4 : 240, Act 1), Magnus accepts it with the best of good humour, when he proudly announces : "An India rubber stamp. That's what you have got to be; and don't you forget it" (4 : 240, Act 1) The king accepts that too, or pretends to accept it, pointing out how the king or the Ministers are equally helplessly led by the government officials. Though Bill Boanerges tries to make the king aware that he represents the voice of the people against the outmoded institution of monarchy represented by Magnus, his accent seems only an inflated one, sometimes very theatrical. The king constantly chooses to speak in undertones, and display himself as a better-witted person, standing firmly on his ground and showing the force of his convictions. If Boanerges sounds very rhetorical, the Cabinet Ministers present a mere puppet show. Though Boanerges boasts of representing the 'truest voice of the people' and is twitted by Magnus to believe that if monarchy is ever abolished and Britain is turned into a republic, Boanerges will become the first British President, Shaw exposes the true nature of democracy through Boanerges himself. "I talk democracy to these men and women. I tell them that they have the vote and that theirs is the kingdom and the power and glory. They say, 'That's right, tell us what to do'; and I tell them, I say, Exercise you vote intelligently by voting for me. And they do. That's democracy : and a splendid thing it is too for putting the right man in the right place." (4 : 244; act 1) The irony gets sharper because it is put on the lips of the leader of the most democratically elected representatives. However, within the scheme of the play, as Boanerges gets deflated, or rather very

ludicrously exposed, Magnus continues to speak in calculated undertones. It is important to note at this stage that in this first meeting between Royalty and Democracy Shaw constantly employs the technique of making Royalty speak in significant undertones and thus score a tactical victory for Royalty itself.

As Boanerges goes on asserting the cipher-like state of the king and upholding the superiority of the democratically elected representatives, the king continually conceals his own strength and even flatters the ego of Boanerges ("To me you have always been an Enigma" (4 : 240, Act 1) or "No common man could have risen as you have done" (4 : 242, Act 1) Thus the king has his own sweet and good-humoured way of winning him over. As the Prime Minister (Proteus), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Pliny) and the Foreign Secretary (Nicobar) enter, squabbling starts; the three, not unjustifiably, suspect that Boanerges has been taken in by the courtesy and finer wit of the king. The Cabinet fails to agree unanimously on any point whatsoever. However, it is decidedly against the king and the royal veto and they give an ultimatum to him, asking him to remain a cipher to the cabinet or assume all power himself, thereby forcing the elected constitutional government to resign.

The members of the Cabinet are, however, as much divided in opinion as is possible. Shaw seems to have taken great care in showing a divided cabinet that cannot work unitedly on any single issue, with all the disqualifications of bourgeois democracy being thoroughly exposed. The king, even when absent from the discussion, makes such a consistently strong impression that he seems to hold the upper hand continually. When Proteus alleges that the king is trying to lead the people and the press against the democratically-elected government ("He said yesterday ... that the king's veto is the only remaining defence of the people against corrupt legislation" (4 : 249 ; Act 1), it is supported by Boanerges, who seems to stand brainwashed by the superior moral stance and better wit of the king. He is seen merely to repeat the king's words ; in place of democracy, he asserts, the people need a strong man to protect themselves against the rich. Thus even before the king confronts it, the cabinet stands a very divided team. While Proteus, the Prime Minister, is hopelessly on the verge of constantly losing his temper and desiring to submit his resignation, there are men like Nicobar and Boanerges himself who have ambitions to capture the post of the Prime Minister. On the whole, the effect is the one produced by quarrelling schoolboys (Pliny scolds them, significantly enough, in this way : "Now boys, boys, boys : be good") All these details, which may be termed preparatory to the king's meeting with the cabinet, are significant from the Shavian point of view. These illustrate the foolish incompetence of the representatives of democracy. When one relates it to the previous interview Boanerges had had with king Magnus, and also to the fact that

the two female Ministers, Amanda the Postmistress General and Lysistrata the Powermistress General, appear in the company of the king himself, the Shavian emphasis on the supremacy of the Monarch becomes only too evident (Shaw's deepest convictions about women as the source of strength being too well known).

As the discussion opens King Magnus, who possesses little constitutional glory except the royal veto, seems to emerge as the most glorious person when he confronts the apostles of democracy with all the constitutional power behind them. Proteus and his consorts threaten him with an ultimatum; but that cannot spoil even his mood of good-humour not to speak of making him feel alarmed. He is justified in throwing the sarcastic remark at the P. M. himself when Proteus threatens him that he has no right to remind his subjects of anything constitutional except by the advice of the Prime Minister : "Which Prime Minister? There are so many of them in the Cabinet". (4 : 254 ; Act 1). The Cabinet tries to force him to accept the ultimatum. But the king continues to find fault with the way along which democracy has steered England. When Proteus comments that the people of England live in solid middle - class comfort achieved by democratic government, Magnus points out the mistakes. The misery and the poverty have only been shifted elsewhere : "No : We have not abolished poverty and hardship. Our big businessmen have abolished them. But how? by sending our capital abroad to places where poverty and hardship still exist... we live in comfort on the imported profits of that capital". (4 : 256 ; Act 1). It is an interesting attitude that Shaw displays by attributing this socialist analysis to king Magnus. However, the inner squabbling of the cabinet hardly ceases, as the king goes on to explore the bombast of the democrats and the inevitable hand of the arch-capitalists, Breakages Ltd., who practically control the economics and politics of the country. After an interlude with his mistress Orinthia, the king comes back to face the Cabinet again, reports (with sarcastic undertones) that the United States of America has decided to rejoin the British Empire and declares also that he desires to abdicate his throne and contest as a candidate in Parliamentary elections. The so-called fair and impartial democrats are shown to demonstrate very excited reaction to this decision by the king. Quite obviously the king seems to be very powerful for them as an opponent. The king even outlines a scheme for forming a party, a possibility which proves too much for them. Instantly the ultimatum is withdrawn; Proteus, the Prime Minister, clears out, obviously feeling inferior and desiring a continuation of the status quo. Nicobar expresses open disgust at the capacity displayed on the part of the king. "You can upset it as soon as you like, for all I care, I am going out of politics. Politics is a mug's game". (4 : 311 ; Act 2)

The play brings out Shaw's awareness of the inevitable ways by which the capitalists (Breakages Limited) control the functioning of democratic government in the country. But as a solution to the predicament he can find none but the king. He makes the king say :

Do not misunderstand me. I do not want the old governing class back. It governed so selfishly that the people would have perished if democracy had not swept it out of politics. But evil as it was in many ways at least it stood above the tyranny of popular ignorance and popular poverty. Today only the king stands above that tyranny. You are dangerously subject to it. (4 : 271 : Act 1)

All the qualities admired by Shaw in an efficient administrator are deliberately presented in Magnus—the power of self-assertion without being boastful, the ability to tackle all kinds of opposition and the gentlemanly way to drive his point home. It is interesting to note that Shaw makes his king the real champion of progress as he conceives it to be. The play provoked intensely antagonistic reactions during Shaw's own day. H. W. Nevinson, writing in *The New Leader* (23rd August 1921), took exception to what he saw to be dangerous tendencies inherent in the play :

That question is, whether a benevolent monarchy is not a better form of government than a democracy...This is where I call the moral of the play pernicious... Shaw throws all the weight of his dialectic on the side of the benevolent monarchy.... If Shaw chooses to represent monarchy by a man of singular charm and wisdom, and democracy by a herd of imbeciles, of course, the triumph of monarchy or benevolent despotism is assured.

Nevinson and even Harold J. Laski were highly apprehensive of the encouragement it would give the autocrats of the day. More recently, speaking to Alfred Turco, Jr., Eric Bentley has emphasised the issue of Shaw's controversial support in the play for totalitarian political regimes, trying to locate its roots in the Fabian movement "which was paternalistic and antidemocratic from the beginning."¹⁶ Bentley identifies the impetus behind Magnus' oration to the cabinet with Shaw's personal disillusionment : ".... the political despair it expresses was quite personal. Shaw identified himself closely with the character of King Magnus as he did with Don Juan who has very long speeches too."¹⁷

In fact Shaw's quest for a better alternative to democracy was destined to no other direction. With his Fabian involvement he could never place his trust in the invincibility of a revolution waged by the proletariat. With the elitist bias that the Fabians always showed in trying to educate and organize the masses he was left with no other option than to seek the autocrat in action. In spite of what the critics were apprehensive about, what emerges from the play is Shaw's refusal to give himself up to despair. He had firmly committed himself to the task of eradicating the faults of the bourgeois social order by embracing the cause of the Fabians. But when the route of parliamentary democracy seemed inadequate and the Fabian vision of transformation through permeation seemed destined towards failure, he wanted things done through the energetic but well-meaning hands of the autocrat. This is fair evidence of his continuing impulse for protest against different aspects of the bourgeois social order and also of his indefatigable commitment to the cause of finding out something that is better.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Throughout the article, the text of George Bernard Shaw's Complete Plays with Prefaces (Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1963), has been used. The first number within the brackets indicates the volume, while the subsequent number refers to the page concerned.

1. Paley David Ian, *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century*, Hampshire and London, The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1986; Roger Hudson quoted on p.1, his article being 'Towards a Definition of People's Theatre', *Theatre Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1971), p.2
2. Tract No. 2 'A Manifesto' (1884) published by the Fabian Society, C. E. M Joad (ed.), *Shaw and Society, An Anthology and a Symposium*, London, Odhams Press Limited, Loang Acre, 1951, p.73.
3. Tract No. 3 (1885), Joad, p.74.
4. Tract No. 40 (1892); Joad, p. 97.
5. Tract No. 70 (1896); Joad, p.128
6. 'Transition to Social Democracy', included in *Essays in Fabian Socialism*, Constable and Company Limited, 1932, rpt. 1949, p.43.
7. Cole, Margaret, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, London and Toronto, Heineman 1961 pp. 29-30.
8. *Vorwärts* (1 May 1906), rpt Lloyd J. Hubenka, *Practical Politics*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1976, p.14.
9. Hubenka, p.12-13
10. Hubenka, p.123
11. Hubenka, p.163
12. Habenka, p. 163
13. *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism*, Penguin Books, England, 1937, 1982, P.480.
14. *Guide*, P.485.
15. Nevinson, H. W. in *The New Leader*, (23 August 1929), reprinted in Evans, T. F. (ed.) *Shaw : the Critical Heritage*, p. 319-20.
16. Alfred Turco Jr., "Show 40 years later-Eric Bentley Speaks his mind on eleven neglected plays" in *Shaw : The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, Vol. 7, ed. Alfred Turco Jr., Pennsylvania State U. P., University Park and London, 1987, p.19.
17. Turco, p.18.

CULTURE, A COUNTERVAILING BARBARISM IN TITUS ANDRONICUS

Aparna Khastgir

TITUS ANDRONICUS has for centuries been either ignored or has been denied by most critics as coming from the hands of Shakespeare. Being one of his earliest works, the play has posed severe problems for generations of readers. The bloodiest of the Roman tragedies, it depicts a barbaric strife between an ideal of political order on the one side, and the 'wilderness of tigers' on the other. The grotesquely mutilated Lavinia on stage, the self-maiming of Titus, the bloody murders of Chiron and Demetrius and the climactic banquet are details which inevitably provoke horror and repugnance in a modern audience. Critics mainly have Jonson in mind while assuming that this sensation-packed drama was one of the most enjoyed plays during Shakespeare's lifetime since the Elizabethan audiences were quite familiar with the conventions of blood and violence on stage. But such a theory cannot be simply assumed because Jonson, while commenting on its reputation in the induction to *Bartholomew Fair*, was also hinting at the old-fashioned tastes :

He that will swear *Jeronimo* [i.e. *The Spanish Tragedy*] or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet, shall pass unexcepted at, here, as a man whose judgement shows it is constant, and hath stood still, these five and twenty, or thirty years.¹

One of the most obvious questions raised about the play is : why has it posed such severe problems? Various factors have complicated our response but we must not overlook the fact that it is in the play's conclusion that the densest concentration of anomalies is noticed. While most of these are linked to the violent actions, others are attributed to difficulties perceived in the quarto text. Moreover, significant questions like the fate of Aaron's child also contribute to the ambiguity at the end. Again, more importantly, the issues of overwrought rhetoric and the limits of its expressibility have brought down on Shakespeare's head the gravest charge that the "incorrect and undigested piece" is rather "a heap of Rubbish than a Structure".² Scholars are understandably puzzled by its hypertrophic language that denies the audience a dramatic engagement with the play. The tongueless Lavinia is the "extreme emblem" of the play's non-communication and in a play like this, "appallingly decorative rhetoric"³ merely aggravates our sense of recoil at the "wrongs unspeakable" (V.iii. 126).⁴ It gives the impression that horrific crimes and excruciating pains are observed with a cool detachment,

a tone which, though suited to narrative poetry like *The Rape of Lucrece*, calls in question the genuineness of emotion depicted in the theatrical rendering of a play. Some have located the problem in Shakespeare's failure to effect a kind of integration between what is said and what is done, a feature unique to this play.⁵ While being sympathetic, scholars have nevertheless taken frequent refuge in branding it as a brilliant "experiment"⁶ and hence, a dubious success, and in doing so they have failed to give recognition to the variety of generic patterns to which the dramatist responds. *Titus Andronicus* does not become a mere juvenile aberration of the dramatist simply because Shakespeare is doing something radical with the available source materials in this play.⁷ One of the most conspicuous facts about his early career is his experimentation with different kinds of drama, in each of which the excellence to be aimed at is peculiar to itself. What therefore seems to some critics to be extraordinary lapses of taste or dubious success may be seen as valid means of realizing the revenge play, different as they are from the means Shakespeare chooses in plays of other kinds. In this particular play he invokes mythological precedents as patterns for tragic structures in performing a critique of imperial Rome on the eve of its destruction. By re-enacting literary history, he invades the classical assumptions of the Ovidian world to discard them as decadent. The myth is conflated to heighten the chaotic disorder of the Roman world in which all distinctions between the cultural boundaries submerge as the characters invoke Ovid as a rationalizer for committing horrific crimes. Thus, unspeakable wrongs and excruciating pains that in the Ovidian narrative seem fantastic and distanced, becomes revoltingly actual when portrayed on the stage through actors. I think that this is the only play apart from *Antony and Cleopatra*, that presents the bitter confrontation of the hard legalistic civilisation of Rome with a strange world of barbarism and libertinism. But whereas in *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare has clearly shown where our sympathies should lie, in *Titus Andronicus*, by the time we approach the end, the distinction between a Roman and a barbarian has become so confused that we are left unsure of our moral bearings. The result is a conclusion that affects us in a peculiar way. This is also because in the former play we have the efficient Caesar successfully bringing order to a disordered world at the end. In the latter, Lucius shows no such convincing signs of capability with the result that the play denies us the aesthetic completeness of tragedy. Turbulence in this world has not been conquered but temporally stopped. In a way we might say that it is the darkest of Shakespeare's plays, offering us no respite whatsoever from the bloody crimes and horrific sufferings. The dramatist has glanced proleptically at the disintegration of imperial Rome by leaving the ending unequivocally pessimistic. It may seem that Shakespeare had well divined, long before England became an imperial power, one of the most challenging problems of imperialism : how to save one's personnel from going native? The nineteenth century English

administrator who dressed in the jungle for dinner had become a figure of fun but there was a sound psychological basis for such antics. Once the emissary of the people drops the conspicuous habits of his own and adopts those of whom he governs, his authority declines. One of the most charged categories in this play thus consists in establishing frequently the boundary between civilisation and barbarism : "Thou art a Roman ; be not barbarous" (I.i.388). 'Civilised' here stands for behaviour and belief that is marked as being within the community as opposed to that which is not. But however pronounced the distinction may be, the apparent firmness of such oppositions are deceptive because they are not born out of differences but by position which is easily reversible.⁸ I would therefore initially approach the play by looking at its three-tier schematisation : opposition, ambiguity and unity. The final incorporation of the Goths into the Roman culture depends initially upon a complete distinction between the two ; but this opposition subsequently disappears giving way to ambiguity. Next, I wish to examine the dramatist's curious handling of the available literary sources in fashioning the cannibalistic feast. This accounts for the distinctiveness of the revenge motive in that the ensuing ambiguity arising out of the disintegration of opposing cultures looks forward to the final unification of the Goths and the Romans, suggesting that at the basis of dualism is a tendency to merge into an unity and oneness that might be achieved through a resolution of differences.

The antithesis between the two territories in *Titus Andronicus* is founded by mutually exclusive and defined categories on the one hand and by a bipolar anthropological structure on the other.⁹ The play opens with a flourish of trumpets and a stately entrance of tribunes and senators on the gallery above. Bassianus and Saturninus enter from opposite doors with their own drums and trumpets. Their entrance through two different doors and use of words like "Noble", "Successive", "First-born", "wrong", "suffer", "indignity", "favourers", "dishonour" and "fight", sets a challenge to the established order at the very beginning, anticipating the discord that is to prevail throughout the play. The issue at stake is to elect a head, a question of paramount importance. Primogeniture not only determined familial inheritance but was the basis of royal succession in the early days of monarchy. However, this was a constant source of disquiet and political turmoil in sixteenth-century England. Marcus's proposal in offering the crown to Titus as an insurance against future political worries makes this amply clear. But Titus rejects such a grave responsibility on the ground that :

A better head her glorious body fits

Than his that shakes for age and feebleness (I.i.186-8)

and instead proposes Saturninus to be enthroned as the elder male heir :

...this suit I make

That you create our emperor's eldest son,
 Lord Saturnine, whose virtues will, I hope,
 Reflect on Rome as Titan's rays on earth,
 And ripen justice in this commonweal. (223-7)

But ironically, this is the first and the greatest of all mistakes that he commits at the beginning, since the very successor elected to maintain law and order will be among the first to break them immediately upon his succession. But before the play can arrive at that state of explicitness we are given a foretaste of Titus's unrelenting nature in his decision to sacrifice Tamora's son. The rites performed at the tomb, the sacrifice of Alarbus and the interment of Titus's sons are symbolic enactments of those traditional Roman values of piety and order for which Titus stand. They show his dedication to certain principles which has resulted in a shocking loss of humanity and makes us aware of the latent barbarity by which this civilisation will ultimately be consumed. Moreover, it prepares us for his ultimate cruelty at the end. Yet, this is no clear-cut evidence of a good man going bad. We see the prevalence of a set of values which should not necessarily prevail in all circumstances. Titus's eldest son, Lucius too, is no less barbarous than his father. His cruel demand, as he drags Alarbus off to a sacrificial execution :

Let's hew his limbs till they can be clean consumed (129)

and later report :

Alarbus' limbs are lopp'd (143)

fill our minds with loathing and prepare the way for what Alarbus' brothers later do to his sister. This reflects the threat that hangs over both the content of a tradition as well as its receivers : that of being overpowered by the ruling class, for if the enemy wins. not even will the dead be safe. When Tamora pleads for her son, Titus refuses mercy on the grounds that :

Religiously they ask a sacrifice (124)

to which she rightly exclaims :

O cruel, irreligious piety! (130)

and one of her sons comment :

Was never Scythia half so barbarous (131)

while another retorts :

Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome. (132)

The dramatic significance of this scene lies not merely in the meeting between the Romans and the barbarians, but in the emergence of the barbarity in the Romans themselves - the noble man turned into a beast.¹⁰ So when the banished Lucius turns to the Goths to 'beg relief' at the play's end

they give us little surprise by 'drowning their enmity in' his 'true tears' and opening 'their arms to embrace' him as a 'true friend'. Similarly, Tamora's speech in pleading with Titus not to overstep the bounds of humanity on the grounds of mere religion is perhaps the most eloquent in the play. If Titus and his sons are valiant heroes in winning their country's victory, her sons are no less heroic for standing up in defence of their motherland. 'Mercy' is 'nobility's tree badge' because it is twice blessed in that

'it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes

The thron'd monarch better than his crown'

(*The Merchant of Venice*) ; IV.i.184-6).

But evidently he is pleading to the wrong man for Titus is no less obdurate than Shylock in craving the law : 'The penalty and forfeit of my bond' (*MV* 203-4). Although Rome ostensibly conquered the Goths, the Goths have so far prevailed in what may be called the peaceful cultural competition between the nations. That is to say, the Romans have gone much further in adopting the Gothic life-style than the Goths have in adopting the Roman. Or, to put it in another way, although the Rome of *Titus Andronicus* is not primitive in the sense that all preliterate societies are, yet, it is a society ruled by the signs of the primitive. The treatment of the dead, the sacrifice of a prisoner-of-war to appease the spirit of the dead, the burial rights are all evidences of such primitivism. Something crucial is being disclosed here in that the elaborate sense of Roman culture is embedded in the valorization of these rites, the avoidance of which would result in a transgression of the Roman sense of honour, virtue and nobility. Roman culture here seems to operate on two levels. At the primary level the emphasis is on being 'civilised'. It signifies a mode of behaviour and belief that is marked as being within the community as opposed to the 'unknown' which is a constant source of fear. The concept of schematizing all antitheses is therefore based on the relation of 'inside' and 'outside' ; whatever is outside the territory is bad, and whatever inside, good. Hence, Montaigne notes that 'each man calls barbaris what ever is not his own practice'.¹¹ Similarly, body-politics, whose coherence and unity can be asserted through the body corporeal, regards everything existing beyond itself to be separate and unassimilated. For, there is no greater sin than being an outsider. But however pronounced the distinction may be, the apparent firmness of such oppositions is deceptive because they are not born out of differences but by position which is easily reversible. Just as at the most elementary level the circumference draws into it what is outside to maintain the centripetal force of the centre, so also a culture finally subsumes all categories of alien that are a threat to the inner stability. When primitivism is thus subsumed and co-ordinated, the once barbarous appears as the very

presence of culture. At a secondary level therefore, the emphasis is on civility countervailing barbarism that submerges the boundary between the cultural antitheses. The result is an ensuing ambiguity that makes distinction between a civilised Roman and a barbarous Goth unreliable. Saturninus and Bassianus fight over and *verbally rape* the silent Lavinia in the first act :

Saturninus Traitor, if Rome have law or we have power.
 Thou and thy faction shall repent this *rape*.
 Bassianus 'Rape' call you it, my lord, to *seize* my own-
 My true betrothed love, and now my wife?
 But let the laws of Rome determine all ;
 Meanwhile am I *possessed* of that is mine.

(i.i.400-05 ; my italics)

while Chiron and Demetrius "the spleenful sons" of Tamora enter the play as potential lovers, not despoilers. On their first appearance, they behave in the tradition of courtly lovers than "barbarous Goths" as they duel with one another for the right to claim the lady and to openly declare their love for her. Thus Chiron dismisses Aaron's caution against fighting his brother with all the authority of a defiant lover : "I care not...I love Lavinia more than all the world", while Demetrius' meditative rhyme on woman reveals the impulses of a love-sick suitor :

She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd
 She is a woman, therefore may be won ;
 She is Lavinia, therefore must be lov'd. (II.i.82-4)

The presentation of Chiron and Demetrius is therefore a contravention of the categorical boundary because the primitive is now the site of culture rather than the absence of it. Not only Tamora, but all other Goths can now proudly announce :

Titus, I am incorporate in Rome,
 A Roman now adopted happily, (I.i.459-60)

I wish to advocate the two modes of this incorporation that are at work in the play-text : knowledge and eating, both of which are acts of consumption. Incorporation is a process concerning embodiment and the bringing together of bodies. Just as the body needs food from outside to survive, so also at a wider social level a culture has the need for exchange and communion through which each individual member of that culture can be absorbed into the larger corporate body. The palate of understanding which operates quite strongly throughout the play, especially in the development of the plot, sees knowledge as the food with which one draws the outer world and possesses it. Shakespeare's Goths are as civilised and humane as Roman letters can make them. When the Queen of Goths is accosted by ironic comparisons to Diana for her obscenity :

Who have we here? Rome's royal empress
 Unfurnish'd of her well-beseeming troop?
 Or is it Dian, habited like her,
 Who hath abandoned her holy groves
 To see the general hunting in this forest? (II.iii.55-9)

she shows no poor rivalry at countering Dians's threat to Actaeon :

Saucy controller of my private steps!
 Had I the pow'r that some say Dian had,
 Thy temples should be planted presently
 With horns, as was Actaeon's ; and the hounds
 Should drive upon thy new-transformed limbs,
 Unmannerly intruder as thou art. (II.iii.60-5)

Again Chiron, frantic with love for the beautiful Lavinia, quotes, albeit inappropriately, what is a corruption of Seneca's *Phaedra* :

Per stygia, per manes vehor (II.i.135)

Phaedra, angry at her unrequited love, cries out "*per styga per amnes igneos amens sequar*" (1180) which, when translated stands : "In my madness I shall follow you over the Styx and the rivers of fire". What it literally means is that her hate shall outlive death itself. But Chiron by misquoting says "I am borne over Styx and the spirits of the dead", literally meaning that he is in hell because of his love. Aaron too, instigates the two brothers to rape Lavinia inciting their male lust through the use of classical allusions. His gift to Chiron and Demetrius,

Take this of me : Lucrece was not more chaste
 Than this Lavinia, Bassianus' love.
 A speedier course than ling'ring languishment
 Must we pursue... (II.i.108-11)

is the motivation for rape through which the "ling'ring languishment" of the lovers become miraculously transformed into a burning lust on the basis of an appeal to expediency. The two must have Lavinia by rape "or not at all". That he, and not Tamora, is the mastermind of the crime clearly emerges in the plan he unfolds to her in the woods by alluding to Ovid :

This is the day of doom for Bassianus ;
 His Philomel must lose her tongue today,
 Thy sons make pillage of her chastity,
 And wash their hands in Bassianus's blood. (II.ii.42-5)

Aaron, the Moor with a Jewish name, Chiron and Demetrius, the two brothers with Greek names, Tamora the new Empress of Rome are so Romanised that culture and anti-culture become one and the same. Even the 'gentle' Lavinia is not so gentle as it apparently seems. In fact, it is her caustic taunts about Tamora's lust that invites her doom :

Tis thought you have a goodly gift in horning,
 And to be doubted your Moor and you
 Are singled forth to try experiments. (II.iii.67-9)

The vulgarity of the tone is definitely dangerous but not unexpected. That she should be different from the rest of the Romans now becomes difficult to believe. Although she is meant to be a symbol of feminine repression under the Roman patriarchy in that her identity is defined in the broader familiar context of the play, she somehow seems to evade such a narrow containment and partially succeeds in doing so when she finally manages to win the man she loves as her husband. Her final participation in the revenge may be sensational but somehow leaves us curiously disturbed since we realise that by the end of the play Lavinia is no longer 'Rome's rich ornament', the idealised feminine beauty possessed by patriarchal Rome. The image of her holding a basin while her father cuts the throats of Demetrius and Chiron comes in with a whole series of associations that finally links her to the wild tiger, Tamora, so much so that it is difficult to recognise who is who. On the other hand, although Tamora promises to massacre Titus's family one day, it is Aaron, not she, who is the thought-element and sole perpetrator of the crimes that Chiron and Demetrius commit at their mother's manipulation. Lavinia's rape stands more as a testament to Aaron's motivelessly malign nature than as a satisfactory statement about rape. By reserving a dominant manipulative role for Aaron, Tamora and her sons are relegated to the background. Hence, the only time she takes upon herself the task of going and entreating Titus and 'fill his aged ears With golden promises', she fails miserably and ends up handing herself and her two sons to Titus. Her failure may be attributed to the supreme risk she was undertaking in carrying the bounds of revenge too far due to her complacent sense of superiority in thinking Titus to be mad. By contrast, the final scene of *Antony and Cleopatra* is powerful and convincing because it does not deny the messiness and meaninglessness of the real world : it allows heroism to grow out of these qualities so that the affirmations of tragedy emerge from the confusion and incoherence of real life. That is why Cleopatra triumphs where Tamora fails. As is obvious, the transgression of the line demarcating the boundary between the civil and the savage in this play is therefore often *drawn*, but not *held* since the civil and the savage happen to be at times in the wrong places.

In order to examine how such anthropological limits are symbolically crossed in order to affect a final unification, it is necessary to look at the revenge motive closely. Debate has raged over the rival claims of Ovid and Seneca and their influences in the play, especially on the form of Titus' revenge. The controversy has been further complicated by the existence of an eighteenth century chapbook incorporating both the Ovidian and the Senecan elements, which scholars believed to have depended on a pre-

Shakespearean source. Before I go farther, I shall first discuss the Thyestean banquet in Seneca which would bring to light some of the crucial differences between Atreus and Titus and the nature of the feast they both prepare. In the Senecan play we see two stages of the catastrophe which breaks upon us like a crescendo of horror. In the fourth act a messenger announces to the chorus how Atreus butchered and cooked the three children of Thyestes. The hyperbolic rendering of the action makes the murder seem like an infernal sacrifice that causes the spectators to turn away from Atreus and his acts in revulsion. Why did Seneca compose such a lurid scene? Is it because he lived in a time which was inured to the supernatural and physical violence? Perhaps so. But this should not blind us to the real effect of the scene. It portrays a psychological disorder that shows a villain at the peak of his megalomania. Atreus' acts are shown horribly because they *are* horrible beyond human comprehension, so much so, that they cause an upheaval in Nature :

The earth
Shudders as if in revulsion from what happens,
and the skies recoil, meteors shooting their murk
in the sinister quarter.¹² (699-702)

Later, seeing Atreus cooking the remains of the butchered children :

The stunned sun shudders
and flees eastward, undoing what has been done (782-83)

that suggests a turning back of time and hence, a disturbance in the natural order. The farmer is amazed at seeing supper time arrive so soon ; sunrise and sunset are confounded and the sky is bereft of moon and the stars. It is as if chaos has once again descended on the universe to bury gods and humans alive. Only the villain is unmoved, he is in his own grotesque universe defying the very gods at having accomplished what he had desired. Seeing his brother feed upon his own flesh and anticipating not merely his pain but the process of that pain which will come over him as soon as he comes to know of the hideous truth, he gloats in sadistic pleasure. The audience already know the terrible truth : the whole drama is psychological in that it is not the eating but the knowledge of what is eaten that produces the real tension. Atreus is a brazen monster who represents extreme evil and total depravity, something which Titus or even Procne never does. He is in this sense probably unique. As the supreme moment of satisfaction draws nigh, Seneca provides us with a telling irony which gives the drama a new psychological perspective. Atreus' victory may be a victory in the context of the dramatic plot. But then, one needs to bear in mind that he has been worked up by Tantalus and the furies in wreaking further havoc upon the house. He is just a puppet in the workshop of Fate, doomed in his own devilish track. What is more, as we reach the end it becomes obvious

that the thirst for revenge in him is insatiable. A crime, he says, has limits, but vengeance is limitless. He even regrets in retrospect that what he has done is not enough for he has left some of the best things undone :

But this is repayment of crime, is vengeance, is different,
and even this is'nt enough. I'd have rather
poured the hot blood fresh from their wounds
Down your retching throat that you could have drunk
the gore of your still-living sons. I hurried.
It was all too quick, too easy. I drove my sword
into their bodies there at the altar. they died
at once - and never knew what happened after. (1053-60)

This kind of rhetoric renders the finale psychologically and aesthetically unsatisfying. Like Milton's Satan, Atreus is a servant and a plaything in whom we see 'programmatic frustration in the midst of triumph'¹³. He is Tantalus, reborn again as Atreus. Finally, there is his paternity complex which stands in the way of his peace of mind. The demonic maniac is riven and torn by suspicions and resentment regarding his sons' parentage since he is aware of his wife's unfaithfulness. One of the most revolting moments in the play is when he, in his quest for truth, sends his questionable sons to lure Thyestes back from exile to Argos. Later, when Thyestes has feasted upon his children, Atreus is especially gleeful, for now, at last, he is sure that they were his brother's offsprings, and not his :

That they were yours. And now are my own sons
mine,
restored to me - if you bedded my wife or not.
Your sons were surely yours, and restored to you. (1099-102)

In order to appreciate Atreus' meaning well, it is important that we see him not as any ordinary man like Titus, driven to an evil course of action. He is a depraved man worked up to the highest pitch. Such evil is rare and has been condemned on the grounds of monstrosity that disturbs even the natural world : a concept of Atreus' character which is Seneca's invention. Moreover, Thyestes is a source of constant danger to Atreus' sovereignty - another good reason for which he and he sons should die. This is yet another proof of the dramatist's fine psychological insight, because self-created fear is part of the essence of the absolute criminal.¹⁴

Coming back to Ovid, we realise that his story is definitely the closer analogue referred to in the play, although the essence of the revenge motive is purely Shakespearean. It is Philomel's rape that functions in the poetics of the cultural breakdown. Ovidian rhetoric is also invoked at almost every step in showing the decadence of Roman education. To Titus' question

'where's our lesson then,' the answer is : it is in subverting the Ovidian text to serve as handbooks for horrific crimes.¹⁵ One of the questions thus frequently raised is : why is Shakespeare at pains to acknowledge his debt to Ovid? The answer to this lies, perhaps, in the young dramatist's technical novelty in that he is here taking up classical assumptions only to challenge and finally discard them. Apart from the very basic parallels between the two stories, it is Ovid and his book which generates the real tension in the play. Even before the prop is introduced on the stage, characters allude to the Ovidian tale of rape and revenge and even try to improve upon their Ovidian counterparts. The result is that if Ovid's story is horrible, Shakespeare's is twice as horrible with two rapists, five murdered children, a mutilated body haunting the stage and to top it up, a cannibalistic feast served at the end. It is as if the dramatist approaches a "myth of competitive mutilation",¹⁶ adding another element of competition by portraying the gruesome actions on stage through the physical actors. Narrative is thus literally and crudely translated into dialogue as well as stage business so that horrors, which in reading seem remote and fantastic, become revoltingly actual. If events described in narratives prove distressing, readers can quickly move on to the next tale. But the audience in a theatre cannot escape the shock of watching distressing spectacles on stage. Moreover, as a dramatist, Shakespeare, unlike Ovid, cannot show us the physical and illogical change of humans to birds and beasts, the world of drama being in this case a limiting medium. What the audience are made to see instead are the intense emotions of the characters which have driven them to transcend their human limits. By alluding to a well known myth at key points, Shakespeare thus allows it to fill the play with its own significance and emotional impact, guiding the imaginative response of the audience to the characters and incidents. The rape and mutilation in the dark woods, the revelation of the crime as well as the villains through the stage presence of Ovid's book, the decision to take revenge, the use of madness as a cloak in hiding real intentions, and finally, the physical cruelty that reaches a climax in the play's culminating moments, are all pointers to the pattern that has been devised by Ovid and subsequently followed and improved upon by Shakespeare. Just as the play starts in the same vein like that of the myth with a marriage that unites an ancient civilization (Athens, Rome) with a barbaric race (Thracians, Goths), the end too springs from this initial violent yoking of the two different cultures. Human bestiality emerges out of the darkness of the woods to engulf the whole city which culminates in the human bast preying upon itself. Ovidian echoes can be heard in the banquet scene of *Titus*, where the step-father Saturninus asks for Chiron and Demetrius in much the same words as Golding's description of Tereus : ¹⁷

King Tereus sitting in the throne of his forefathers, *fed*,
And swallowed downe the selfe same *flesh* that of his bowels *bred*
And he (so blinded was his heart) *fetch* Itys *hiter*, *sed*.

Saturninus : *Fetch them hither* to us presently.

Titus : Why there they are, both baked in that pie ;
 Whereof their mother daintily hath *fed*,
 Eating the *flesh* that she herself hath *bred*. (V.iii.58-61)

At the play's close Lucius' use of the tiger-image while casting judgement upon Tamora's way of life recalls the striking use made of the same image by Arthur Golding. Not only does Titus try to outdo the myth by using comparatives like :

Worse then Philomel you us'd my daughter
 And *worse* than Procne I will be reveng'd (V.ii.194-5)

but *Thyestes* too, alludes to Philomela and Procne as models for Atreus' revenge. Nevertheless, Titus' revenge is both aesthetically and dramatically more satisfying than Ovid's text and more so than Seneca's and the reasons for it are not far to seek. Some have condemned the revenge in that the hero's collapse is merely "revolting" and "incredible",¹⁸ very unlike the tragic transformations of Othello, Brutus or Lear, and find it hard to agree that the audience are "unsure" of their "moral bearings" regarding the play.¹⁹ I find it difficult to write off the finale as incredible, albeit, horrific, precisely because this is what Shakespeare is up against. It is Ovid whose changes have an element of magic, and hence they are psychologically absurd. Philomela's tale, like *Titus* is based upon a tension between the rigid familial and social ties in which all distinctions finally submerge. Tereus' rape of Philomela changes all the covenants and principles of value into meaninglessness :

All is confused! I'm made a concubine,
 My sister's rival ; you're a husband twice,
 And Procne ought to be my enemy!²⁰

It therefore comes as little surprise when Procne is entrapped in the three conflicting roles of sister, wife and mother. She burns with the same fire which Tereus has set aflame when she plans a punishment mirroring her husband's crime. Like her husband she too is unable to maintain clear distinctions when she sees in her son the reflection of his father and proceeds to kill him. The cannibalistic feast is therefore given a more subtle and psychological twist for the readers since it is the dreadful image of confused identities. The banquet in *Titus Andronicus*, although riveting, is nowhere near Ovid or Seneca in its ugliness for the onlookers on stage. The impact of the horror is much subdued because the killing of Chiron and Demetrius is not as unspeakable as the butchering of the son by a mother or the infernal sacrifice of three innocent lives by an uncle. It is not that Shakespeare is less psychological in his handling of events. But writing in a dramatic medium, he is more interested in the reaction of the characters onstage rather than the audience, since, the audience and the dramatist operate on a higher

plane of awareness and understanding as regards the proceedings on stage ; Ovid, on the other hand, seeks to affect the readers psychologically. It is more a question of focus and the mediums in which they work, that distinguishes the two. Therefore, in Shakespeare, it is not so much the death of the two dullards but the way in which they meet their ends that is shocking. Yet such an end remains peculiarly justified when judged in the context of the innocent Lavinia's mutilation that instigated such a revenge. By contrast, because the characters killed in Ovid and Seneca are non-human gods and therefore the ultimate desecration of religion, we find ourselves as ordinary human beings, watching with incredulity, the proceedings of a grotesque universe. What has been thought tender and human in the motherly waverings of Procne turns out to be its very opposite. Her action is no more than a metaphorical picture of the sort of confusion about family roles and obligations which first inflamed Tereus' lust when he set eyes upon Philomela. In contrast, the chaos or the lack of control in the final orgy which *Titus* illustrates, does not come as a shock to the audience. *Titus* had begun with a political tempest which substitutes, inverts and finally renders everything meaningless. This is again a fundamental difference between Shakespeare's and Ovid's literary practices : the audience in this play are brutally confronted from the beginning right to the end with the art of contamination and the ravages of social disorder. Shakespeare does not indulge in liberating his characters into birds and beasts - instead they loom in front of us as significations of a dismembered and mutilated Ovidian text of Rome's former greatness. Another significant distinction of this play is its incorporation of Ovidian and Senecan elements to *complete* the cycle of violation, something which both the Philomela and Thyestes stories lack. Seneca portrays the insatiable nature of Atreus' revenge, a curse which hangs on the household of Tantalus. In Ovid too, even before the myth can reach a satisfying end, awful consequences are side-stepped in the context of metamorphic end. Such an evasion in real life context would be unbearable psychologically. Besides, not only the characters, but the readers too, are let off the hook from coping against horrific events. This consciousness of fiction that forms a part of the Ovidian sophistication constitutes for Shakespeare one of the greatest appeals. Shakespeare had a specially trained literary ear which one must have if a myth is to work upon one fully. He saw in mythologies musical ground-themes, inviting variations and new inventions. He also perceived the pictorial quality of myth - those various images that are at once an unfolding, a making of story and meaning. As we study his responses to Ovid, Seneca, Virgil or even the Bible, we watch simultaneously how in his plays the myths are released, reshaped and recreated. In Ovid the transformation of characters into birds signifies a flight into wilderness from civilization, once the rigid familial categories in which they operated dissolved. In this sense the metamorphosis is as much a beginning as an end ; an end in that both audience and characters are

eternally poised at the culminating moment of the myth, and a beginning in the sense that Tereus will forever start to pursue the women until all three get caught in the narrator's destructive power of metamorphosis. The struggle between the metamorphic power and the sense of real selfhood looks forward to the Keatsian world of the Grecian Urn where the happy world of the urn is after all, not so happy as it apparently seems. The confining power of self awareness forces upon the poet this realisation and the poor consolation that comes with it :

Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

But on the other hand, the process of cultural disintegration that had *started* with the sign of Lavinia's body reaches its *final* through her death. Shakespeare was perhaps remembering the mythology of Rome's being founded on rape. Titus' Rome is not merely ravaged by the Goths but by her champions too, particularly the two brothers, Saturninus and Bassianus who vie for Lavinia, "Rome's rich ornament" as well as the imperial throne. Lavinia and the crown are therefore equated in that they both incite male lust. It is worthwhile to mention in this context that the display of the monarch's body in maintaining the power of the state was considered to be a significant factor contributing to the growth of the theatre in the reign of Elizabeth. *Titus* revolves round this notion of the state being synonymous with the body of an aristocratic female. One of the reasons for bringing the mutilated Lavinia on stage in the second act is to call attention physically to her mutilated body. She is a part of the political iconography, her mutilated body signifying a disintegrated Rome which Shakespeare understood and exploited so well for his dramatic purposes. But Shakespeare seems also to have complied with the ethos that rape and adultery are synonymous since they have the same polluting effect. The patriarchy which had therefore been tainted by Lavinia's ravishment can only be renewed by her death. Since her body is the site of a political conflict for power-seeking men, the best way to assert one's supremacy would be to inscribe upon that body the evidence of that power. For her ravishers, therefore, possessing her is the same as possessing Rome. It therefore seems inevitable that Lavinia should be killed by Titus. Her rape was an outrage committed on Titus which is precisely the sort of revenge intended by Tamora. By slaying Lavinia he gives himself a self-inflicted wound that brings death to all those competing for power over Rome. Even amidst the carnage of the final scene, the killing of the innocent Lavinia is tinged with pathos. Lavinia can only erase the evidence of her shame which the barbarians had inflicted upon her body through death. Moreover, by her killing Titus can end his sorrows too since he knows his revenge guarantees death :

Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee
And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die. (V.iii.45-6)

Whereas Atreus and Procne butchered innocent lives in extreme hate to seek their revenges, Titus kills his innocent daughter with love to liberate her from her wretchedness and to affirm Roman paradigms of virtue. But what is essentially disturbing is that her death, like her earlier rape, remains bracketed in silence. On both occasions, the best that both the audience and characters on stage can do is to presume knowledge of her experience. Although Marcus and Titus take upon themselves the task of interpreting her narrative of rape, her own story is lost beyond recovery. "A poor instrument without a sound", Lavinia can never lend words to her ordeal and what little is known can only be apprehended as mindless. Moreover, she can only name the "Performers of this heinous, bloody deed" but not the real author of her rape, because while she acts as a type of linguistic signifier, the limitations of her knowledge as to who orchestrated her violence means that she can never impart the full sign. Even so, her stage presence is so powerful that it becomes extremely difficult for the audience to regard either her rape as her father's "loss" or her death as the "death" of his sorrow. We also do not know how eager this silent figure is, if at all, to participate in her father's revenge. Her acquiescence cannot be interpreted as a purely volitional act since she is a figure trapped in the relentless mechanism of revenge which she can escape either through madness or death. We remain discomfited by the thought of how she might have reacted to these alternatives had she the means. Once again, her reaction may only be meditated upon since no one can confront the possibility of knowing her helpless pain. Hence the scepticism surrounding Titus' act of killing his daughter that highlights once more the confused issues of right and wrong in this play.

Earlier in my article I spoke about knowledge being one of the ways of incorporation of the primitive into the world of the civilised. Eating, which is the most basic of all needs, is the second dominating image in the concluding moments of the play. It is through this metaphor of consumption and its analogues that all complexities, ambiguities and differences are resolved through the achievement of symbolic unification on multiple levels. In the cardinal act of eating human flesh, another confused issue - this time of identity, gives rise to the central question : who is the cannibal - Titus, who cooks the sons, or, Tamora, who unwittingly eats them? This is a moment of intense suspense, not only for the onlookers, but for the directors and spectators as well. Attention is directed to the woman's mouth since it is "maternal sexuality conceived and represented sexually as the ruthless, devouring power"²² which is being assessed here :

Will't please you eat? Will't please your highness
feed? (V.ii.53)

Tamora, like the earth, is the devouring mother swallowing her own increase "daintily". The act is symptomatic of the female as matter, sensual and passionate. Achilles complains in *Troilus and Cressida* of a "woman's longing/An appetite that I am sick withal" (III.iii.237-38) while Orsino confidently tells Cesario that a woman's love is "appetite,/No motion of the liver, but the palate" (*TN* ; II.iv.96-7). Cleopatra's Egypt also indulges appetites strongly and voraciously. One of the key motives of this tragedy is of dismemberment as evinced in the various references to mutilation. This misogynistic nexus of ideas in the play is ultimately related to a pervasive attitude of distrust of the body. The extreme cruelty and disrespect shown to the physical self through Lavinia's rape and mutilation and Tamora's eating of human flesh remain unsurpassed that signifies a leap from the hatred of the body to the hatred of the body's maternal begetter. The two hatreds which were earlier joined symbolically by the theatrically dominant image of the pit and the tomb are once more united by Tamora and Lavinia's mouth. In Tamora the mouth is the swallowing womb, while in Lavinia it is the hole signifying the female genitalia. Not only these, but Titus too is united with the barbarous Goths as he slips into a state of casual brutality comparable to that of Chiron and Demetrius on transgressing the line demarcating the cultural boundary of the civil and savage by cooking and serving human flesh. Finally, when the purging resolution comes, it comes only partly out of the Roman tradition, but more mainly from a source that has been looked down upon as barbarous and hence, inappropriate. Lucius flees the city on being banished and returns triumphantly as the head of a Gothic army acceding to power in Rome. This suggests not only symbolic but also topographical union with the enemy. If his sentence on Aaron and Tamora is markedly different from his treatment of the Roman dead who are honoured with proper burial rites, it is because their sentences are very differently coded. Boundaries sometimes have to be crossed symbolically in order to act effectively as cultural demarcations since structuralism reveals that without binary opposition there can be no meaning. In any form of unification or incorporation, order is always guaranteed by the superior term's control over the inferior. It represents an experience where extremes meet in an identity achieved through the subordination, even *annihilation*, of one of the terms. It is for this that Aaron needs to be killed, although his innocent child is saved - a potentially rich symbol at the play's end that seems to break the seemingly endless cycle of vengeance. For much the same reason Tamora's corpse is reviled and released forever from society into wilderness. Only through such acts can an equilibrium be achieved - that art of knitting the "scattered corn into one mutual sheaf,/These broken limbs into one body" (V.iii.70-2). The end of *Titus Andronicus* is a representation of *concordia discors*, where extremes meet, although not in equal relation. Cultural primitivism of the enemy is subsumed into the Roman tradition, but primitivism in the sense of anti-cultural savagery is

jettisoned out from the society in order to constitute a separate place beyond the city walls. Finally, to maintain this newly achieved state of poise it will be essential to keep the motivations and sources of authority in order, the confusion of which had originally resulted in such a chaos. No Sinon had insinuated the fatal engine into Rome, it was Rome's own doing, a "shameful execution on herself". The Rome that we see throughout is neither Virgilian in that it concerns the great vision of empire-building, nor Ovidian in its vision of the archetypal city marked as the place of civilisation, a notion powerfully sedimented in the western tradition. Instead, Shakespeare's vision of Rome is apocalyptic in its terrible "wilderness" that transports Roman origins to their end.²³ His survey of Rome, like the English history, thus once again begins at the end to return to the contemplation of its beginning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My grateful acknowledgements to Professor Dipendu Chakraborti of Calcutta University and Dr. Rivkah Zim of King's College, London for their valuable comments while reviewing this article.

REFERENCES

1. Ben Jonson, *Induction*, II. ed. E.A.Horsman (1960) ; p. 107-10
2. These memorable words cited above come from Edward Ravenscroft, the seventeenth century playwright who refurbished *Titus* for the stage. See his 'To the reader', his preface to his own *Titus Andronicus, or the Rape of Lavinia* (London, 1686).
3. Charles Forker, 'Titus Andronicus, Hamlet and the Limits of Expressibility', *Fancy's Images : Contexts, Settings, and Perspectives in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Southern Illinois Press, 1990) ; p. 18-42
4. All references to *Titus* are from *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (1987).
5. G.R. Hibbard, *The Making of Shakespeare's Dramatic Poetry* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981) ; pp. 41-53
6. Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (Methuen, 1986) ; pp. 13-47. This is the explicit assessment of Brooke and Tricomi. Those scholars who defend the serious artistry of the play, but talk about its place in Shakespeare's developmental stage are implicitly taking this stance, as does A. C. Hamilton, "Titus Andronicus : The Form of Shakespearean Tragedy", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XIV (1963), pp. 201-13.
7. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Clarendon Press, 1993) ; pp. 173.

8. Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism : An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) ; p. 4
9. Francis Barker, *The Culture of Violence : Tragedy and History* (Manchester Univ. Press, 1993) ; p. 148
10. Nicholas Brooke, p. 20.
11. "Of Cannibals," in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford Univ. Press, 1976) ; p. 152
12. All references to *Thyestes* are from David R. Slavitt's translation (John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992)
13. See Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clarke, *Senecan Tragedy* (Adolf Hakkert, 1988) ; pp. 252-3
14. P.J. Enk, "Roman Tragedy", *Neophilologus*, vol. 40-41 (1956-57) ; pp. 293-4
15. Grace Starry West, "Going by the Book : Classical Allusions in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 79 (1982) ; pp. 63-75
16. Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh : Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, 1986) ; pp. 244
17. Antony B. Taylor, "Shakespeare's Use of Golding's Ovid as Source for *Titus Andronicus*", *Notes And Queries*, NS XXXV (1988) ; p 449
18. Reuben A. Brower, *Hero & Saint : Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Tradition* (Clarendon Press, 1971) ; p. 199
19. Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (Routledge Paperback, 1965) ; p. 6
20. Reference to Ovid's *Metamorphosis* is from A.D. Melville's translation (Oxford Univ. Press, 1986)
21. John Keats, *Selected Poetry* ed. Paul de Man (Meridan Calssic, 1966)
22. C.L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler, *The Whole Journey : Shakespeare's Power of Development* (Univ. of California, 1986) ; p 136
23. Heather James, "Cultural Disintegration in *Titus Andronicus* : mutilating Titus, Vergil, and Rome", *Themes in Drama*, vol XIII (1991) ; p. 124.

THE TERMS OF CULTURAL CRITICISM

Shelley Walia

WITH the advent of postmodernism and the rapid and radical social change in its wake, the nature of those disciplines that both reflect our culture and help to shape it have inevitably undergone transformation. This is nowhere more apparent than in the significant field of literary and cultural studies. Modes and categories inherited in their conventional form no longer fit the reality experienced by a new generation of a large number of students at all levels of education. There is a visible erosion of the assumptions and presuppositions that supported literary disciplines in the past.

Culture is best understood in relation to the idea of the social nature of human life and in literary studies this includes criticism that takes literary works to be articulations of social and historical forces. According to Raymond Williams, culture is one of the two or three most complex words in the English language. This is so partly because of its intricate evolution in many European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct and incompatible intellectual disciplines.

New notions of the nature of literature itself, of new analytical methods that indicate the seeming limitations of the Anglo-American critical approach, new concepts of literary and cultural forms and modes, all these have contributed to the extinction of boundaries that till now restricted the study of literature. Wider anthropological and sociological areas of investigation into the relationship of art to our whole way of life focuses concern on the important area of culture.

Though it has connotations of aesthetic development pertaining to works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity, in recent literary-critical debates the term 'culture' has been employed to situate literature in a socio-historical context without the use of terms which might invoke a specifically Marxist methodology. Within cultural studies it has been seen in terms of Raymond Williams's alternative definitions of culture in *Keywords*. These are, first "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development" ; second, "a particular way of life of either people, a period or a group" ; third, "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity".¹ In recent feminist criticism, all gender

1. Raymond William, *Keywords* (Glasgow : Fontana, 1976), 80.

characteristics and rules are attributed to culture rather than biological factors. It therefore has to be understood that cultural formations are systems of discourses which may or may not represent class interests. They are the creations of productive forces and relations.

The nature of literary study is as important as it is relatively neglected.² What is literary criticism and how is it advanced through the continual erosion of critical presuppositions and grounds? How does it come about, change and interact with a culture within which it operates? And what do we do when we read, teach and write about literary texts? In suggesting answers to these questions, cultural studies provide an important new history and interpretation of literary criticism as an intellectual and cultural practice in the twentieth century. The difference between "criticism" and "critique" needs to be addressed as it is something which has been neglected within the reconstituted English departments and cultural studies programmes. The "method" of critique is to subject a mode of understanding to a thorough interrogation of its procedures and conclusions from the viewpoint of its own suppositions. An English education becomes increasingly defined "by the proliferation of reconstructed canons of study in the academy, including the texts of the 'new' Anglo-American studies and the steady importation of African and other third-world texts, from exploration of nation and narration to the diversity of trans-national cultural schemes and texts".³

Courses at the graduate level in universities around the world substantially concentrate on cultural conflicts and interchange, confronting the established Western canons with many third-world texts. This has political implications as the established courses contain reading lists that often fail to reflect the needs of the minorities. The debate at the University of Stanford during the eighties has given an impetus to faculties and students to choose their own courses, adopting perceptions from recent critical theory to create confrontations of inter-textual related readings. This dispute undoubtedly emphasises the issue's political and cultural dimensions simultaneously. This indicates a recognition of heterogeneity in culture and in the increasing student population of minority cultures that is behind the adoption of a more globally oriented course.

Situating literature in relation to culture, it becomes essential to examine the history of the concept of philosophical critique from the Enlightenment through to the present, focusing constantly on critiques of cultural assumptions and institutions that are pursued in literary studies. Analysis of psychological criticism, structuralism and semiotics, philosophical

2. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schieffer, *Criticism and Culture : The Role of Critique in Modern Literary Theory* (London : Longman, 1991).

3. Davis and Schieffer, viii

criticism, Marxist and Foucauldian criticism and feminism are taken up with the aim of showing that it is not possible to proceed with "critique" without an engagement with cultural analysis. It must be taken for granted that the nature of the critical enterprise is both an epistemological and a social activity. To examine the function of criticism as the transmission of culture, and in its placing literature as an object of knowledge by defining culture in relation to literary texts, the works of Irving Babbitt, T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, I.A. Richards, Raymond Williams and American New Criticism are very relevant. Within literary studies this includes criticism that sees literary works as articulations of the ethical questions implicit in ideas, ideology and understanding.

Literary and cultural studies have much common ground to tread. Drawing on a range of different academic disciplines such as anthropology, social history, linguistics and sociology, cultural studies has emerged as a separate field of interdisciplinary study in recent years, though way back in the sixties it was Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams who were responsible for its conception. Both these key figures were drawn from the area of literary studies to larger historical, cultural and political issues of both a practical and a theoretical nature. The sociology of literature forms an intrinsic area of their study within what Raymond Williams has termed "the culture and society debate". A strong interest in theory and a general radical flavour are characteristics of this discipline which has drawn immensely on literary studies as well as given to it the study of popular and non-canonical writing. It concerns itself with the problems of vital importance to society and in the words of Richard Hoggart covers "the whole way of life, its beliefs, attitudes and temper as expressed in all kinds of structures, rituals and gestures, as well as in the traditionally defined forms of art".⁴ This urge towards a totalising perspective, tracing connections and influences and at the same time rejecting any kind of academic compartmentalising characterises the discipline of cultural studies.

Cultural critics explore the postmodern conditions across disciplines and genres as diverse as philosophy, political theory, architecture, film, TV, media and contemporary cultural politics, thereby making an incisive contribution to the history of ideas and their relation to social and political change. The postmodern debate within cultural studies is a self-reflexive phenomenon whose nature and form themselves reflect the conditions of the postmodern and the institutional conditions along with intellectual regroupings which give shape to contemporary critical theory and critique.

4. Richard Hoggart, "Contemporary Cultural Studies : An Approach to the Study of Literature and Society", Malcolm Bradbury, ed. *Contemporary Criticism*, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 12 (London : Arnold, 1970). 156.

There is a possibility that openness and diversity in global culture which this approach encourages might usher in a cultural-political ethics in the post-postmodern era. The social and economic basis of this, in the words of Terry Eagleton "free-floating phenomenon" of postmodernist culture, is one important way of identifying contemporary experience with all its variants that effect individual values and social processes of the most fundamental kind.

Though it often seemed in the last few years that the concept of postmodernism would fade away under the painful burden of its own incoherence, the attraction for it and the clamour of debates has multiplied. With its powerful configurations of new sentiments and thoughts it seemed, as David Harvey argues, "set fair to play a crucial role in defining the trajectory of social and political development simply by virtue of the way it defined standards of social critique and political practice."⁵ It is very clear at present that the parameters of political and intellectual criticism and the complex processes of cultural production and ideological transformation are defined and determined through the "cultural hegemony of postmodernism",⁶ a cultural aesthetic in its own right, though several other ways may simultaneously achieve these features.

5 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1989), viii.

6. Harvey, ix.

ANITA DESAI'S NOVELS : A STUDY IN VERBAL PATTERN AND PSYCHE

Kunjala Goel

ANITA DESAI is not interested so much in registering surface realities as in the probings of inner truths lying under the surface level. In order to present this submerged psychic truth she employs various linguistic devices. Carefully chosen clusters of images, symbols mythical or otherwise, figure most prominently amongst these devices deployed by her. Apart from them, quite often she makes use of fresh collocations, deviations and parallelisms to render the uniqueness of the psyche of her characters. She exploits even phonological patterns like alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme etc. Sometimes different levels of semantic interpretation also become significant for these presentations.

In Mrs. Desai's hands imagery becomes a very powerful mode to represent the perception of a character. In the following extract she is commendably capable of objectifying the particular bent of her character's mind :

Into this din, a tonga had driven up and disgorged a flurry of guests in their visiting saris, all to flap their palm-leaf-hand-fans as they sat in a ring about her—the wives and daughters of the lecturers and professors over whom her husband ruled ... her eyes flashed when she heard, like a pair of black blades, wanting to cut them, crawling grey bugs about her fastidious feet.

(Fire on the Mountain p. 18)

Expressions like "disgorged", "crawling grey bugs" and "eyes flashed ... like a pair of black blades" give a specific shade of hatred and awareness of meaninglessness to the image and thereby suggest Nanda's withdrawal from the so-called normal routine life.

In the above quoted passage, though the objects seem to be seen through a particular psyche they have their own clear identity, while in the following one they are on the verge of getting lost in the subjective worlds of the character.

He had been—large or small, I cannot remember but his eyes I do ; they were pale, opaque, and gave him an appearance of morbidity, as though he had lived like a sluggish white

worm, indoors always ; in his dark room at the temple gates, where the central 'lingam' was painted bright, vicious red, as though plunged in sacrificial blood, and light burned in a single lamp from which oil spilled into a large spreading pool.

(*Cry, The Peacock*, pp. 28-29)

It is a typical Indian scene of a temple with a red-painted 'lingam' at the centre, an oil lamp and a foreteller examining the horoscope of a young girl still to be married. But these referential details have been given hardly any significance in comparison to the depiction of the impression of these objects on Maya's psyche. There are a great number of adjectival and adverbial phrases portraying not so much the objects themselves as the subjective way Maya views them.

When Mrs. Desai wants to present not just the subjective world of Maya but rather her psychic disintegration, she moulds images in such a way that the objects get increasingly blurred and confused. In the beginning only the edges of the images are mixed e.g. the tail of the rat gets merged with father and father's voice becomes the voice of the peacock, yet they are recognisable. Later, they all get mixed up leading to an imagistic disorder which sets forth effectively the chaos of Maya's psyche.

Symbols also have a vital role to play in displaying different psychic states. Generally the symbols used by Mrs. Desai are a part of the circumstantial details of the narrative. They acquire significance because of the appropriate correlation between the object and its symbolical meaning. The houses in *Fire on the Mountain*, *Where shall We Go this Summer?* and *In Custody* are an essential part of the created world, giving to the world of the novel a "solidity and specification". Their symbolical meanings are only semantic extrapolations. Yet they are capable of objectifying the inner psychic layers of characters in a powerful way. In *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* the house Sita comes to live in at Manori, after a gap of twenty years, is evocative of her desertion of normal routine life and objectifies the fear that is harboured in her heart.

In Mrs. Desai's novels, at times, very minor objects seem to attain symbolical overtones and effectively outline a particular shade of mind or a psychic tension. 'Tea', generally associated with normal, practical day-to-day life and togetherness, is rightly associated with Gautam and not with Maya in *Cry, The Peacock*. As soon as Gautam disposes of Toto's body, "it is all over" for him, so he says to Maya : "Come and drink your tea and stop crying" (p.6). Gautam's readiness to have tea is clearly symbolical of his getting over Toto's death which becomes an obsession for Maya. In *Bye-Bye Black-bird* this symbol is judiciously related to Sarah. When Adit for the first time announces his decision to leave England and declares that his son will be born in India, Sarah finds herself in a psychic turmoil,

but soon having overpowered the storm in her heart she announces : "Let's have a cup of tea" (p. 204).

If symbols, generally through their extra-semantic impositions, help Mrs. Desai to objectify the nuances of a character's subjective world, at times, also by only half-revealing the truth they enable the novelist to delineate the psychological depth of the characters. For instance, in *Cry, The Peacock*, Mrs. Desai suggests the subconscious decision of Maya to murder Gautam through the dust symbol. As this decision never comes to the surface of Maya's consciousness, Mrs. Desai cannot state it in clear palpable terms. Therefore, it is through the highly cautious employment of the 'dust storm' that the novelist suggests the preceding psychic turmoil and the following peace. The decision remains only as something vaguely and dimly felt - never defined. Had the decision been explicitly stated through clear denotative terms, Maya instead of being the loved and sympathised protagonist would have been a murderous villainess, and the tour de force of the novel a fiasco.

Some of the traditional symbols have been reinterpreted by Mrs. Desai for the sake of rendering highly individualised psyches. In *Cry, The Peacock*, the repeated references to a peacock as a "brain fever bird", "a reminder of death" and "ill fated lover" are contrary to the traditionally popular image of the peacock. Its dancing image in the rainy season has been associated with love, romance and beauty and not with fighting, mating and dying. By presenting the peacock in her arbitrary symbolical colours, Mrs. Desai is making an attempt to depict Maya's mental predicament—a deep love for life with a sure knowledge of death to follow. But it is true that this identification of the peacock with Maya's psyche gives the impression of being an unsatisfactory contrivance to many readers.

Myths, also deployed by Mrs. Desai with all their religious and traditional associations, lay out the psychological depths of her characters. They are powerful instruments to suggest what cannot be expressed denotatively. To take an example, the mythological Sita, though not presented directly in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, yet owing to the identity of her name with that of the protagonist of this novel, reveals the ironical shades of the portrayal of the protagonist who suffers in her exile not from the memories of intense love for her husband, but from alienation.

At times a gap between two semantic levels of interpretation of one statement also becomes functional in revealing the inner world. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* pregnant for the fifth time, Sita declares, "I don't want to have the baby" (P.34). It is indicative of her metaphysical desire not to commit an act of violence by giving birth to a child which is now so safely contained in her womb into a world which is full of violence and destruction. Raman interprets her declaration as her desire to have an

abortion. The metaphysical level at which Sita lives is far beyond Raman's reasoning which is confined to material commonsense. The difference between these two semantic levels of interpretation makes the couple stare at each other uncomprehendingly and designate each other as 'mad'.

A character's speech is highly effective in throwing light on his temperament. In Mrs. Desai's hands it becomes a powerful instrument. For example, in *Voices in the City*, when Amala comes to Calcutta she invites Jiban and Monisha to tea at her aunt's place; the few sentences that Jiban speaks at this informal intimate gathering are highly suggestive of his formal, stolid, unfeeling personality, and highlight the cause of his alienation from Monisha who is a highly sensitive, emotional and sincere person. With reference to the forests he says : "It is a sight to sadden one's heart; these virgin forests laid low by the fell hand of man..." (p.194). The use of the anticipatory 'It' in "It is a sight to sadden..." distances the subject and suggests a formal, impersonal tone that is outlandish in this informal, intimate gathering; phrases like "sadden one's heart" "virgin forests laid low", "fell hand of man" etc. sound insincere and artificial. While going home he tells his niece Bun Bun, "I trust you have thanked your aunt and great aunt for this most enjoyable evening spent under their auspices" (p.198). The highly formal tone in this informal gathering shows that Jiban has learnt only one role to play in his life and that is of the formal, rigid, apathetic officer. It is no wonder then that he miserably fails in his relationship with Monisha.

Often Mrs. Desai resorts to a skilful deployment of phonological sounds to render the inner world of her characters. Among the phonological devices used by her, alliteration, assonance, rhyme and use of harsh sounds figure most prominently. In the novel *In Custody* when Sarla, ridden by Indian social tradition, cannot utter any word to vent her anger against her husband and just sulks and retires to her kitchen, the writer says : "It was only when she had disappeared into this narrow, cluttered fastness of hers and could be heard freely rattling and clattering in there that it occurred to Deven..." (P. 127). It is through the repetition of the harsh/k'/t'/and/d/ phonemes that Mrs. Desai expresses the turmoil in the heart of Sarla—her anger and bitterness against her husband. To take one more example we can see the following extract where alliteration seems to lend a comic effect to Ila's character and thus expresses Nanda's attitude to Ila, which she shares with her late husband and probably also with the novelist : "Ila Das came, bobbing and bouncing, in button boots, her umbrella wildly swirling to tea". (*Fire on the Mountain*, p. 22). By emphasizing the words involved, alliteration enhances the ludicrous nature of Ila who has been presented as rather a ridiculous person for being too involved in life which is ultimately absurd.

Mrs. Deasi is remarkably successful in portraying the psyche of her sensitive, emotional and sensuous characters. Her language runs so smoothly and expresses the inner world of her select characters so impressively that the reader's attention is rarely distracted by its few minor limitations.

REFERENCES

1. Desai, Anita. **Bye-Bye Blackbird**. 1971; rpt. Delhi: Vision Books, 1985.
2. **Cry, the Peacock**. 1963; rpt. Delhi : Orient Paper backs, 1983.
3. **Fire on the Mountain**. New Delhi : Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1977.
4. **In Custody**. 1984; rpt. England : Penguin Books, 1985.
5. **Voices in the City**. 1965; rpt. New Delhi : Orient Paper-backs, 1982.
6. **Where shall We Go this Summer?** 1975; rpt. Delhi : Vision Books, 1982.

PERSONIFICATION OF CONCEPTS IN AUGUSTAN POETRY : A PLEA FOR RETHINKING

Tapan Raychaudhuri

In the changing perspective of criticism, one element of the eighteenth century poetry seems still to be in great disfavour with the critics. It is the personification of abstract ideas — or concepts — in that poetry. We no longer judge the eighteenth century poets in comparison with the Romantics, with an ostensible impartiality in taste and judgement. We have learnt that in the display of wit, chiselling of language to the keenest point of refinement, in the matching together of odd and mutually exclusive elements, so highly talked of in the name of **unification of sensibility**, the non-classicists — Pope and his contemporaries — are the direct descendants of the Metaphysicals. In poetry, the idiom of the Augustans appears nearer to us than that of the Romantics, and in criticism their judgement has been acclaimed as the voice of sanity and rationality as against the patently risky 'O altitudo' of the Romantics.¹ But all these are, for Douglas Bush, 'virtues of craftsmanship', and 'virtues of craftsmanship, sanity and good taste' are for Bush, and may be for many, 'only secondary virtues', and never the greatest signs of a poetic genius.² What the eighteenth century poets lack is imagination or, more correctly, inspiration. Wordsworth's modest warning that poets differ nothing in kind from other men, but only in degree³, is not powerful enough to discourage the critics from thinking that it is by virtue of some indefinite quality that poets are great :

It may be granted that writers, from Dryden and Pope down, have more emotion than they have commonly been allowed... but it remains true, to reaffirm another platitude, that most of the delightful writing put forth in that age is not great poetry ... There is not much eighteenth century verse which in poetic emotion, imagination and beauty, equals, say, Gibbon's prose...⁴

The best proof of the absence of the quality of inspiration in eighteenth century poetry is said to be the use of the mythological elements, and, what may be taken as another manifestation of this mythological quest, the personification of abstract concepts in Augustan poetry. Whereas in the hands of the Elizabethans, the Greek and Roman mythological wealth, handed down through the universal store of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, became living poetry, in the hands of the Augustan poets it became a dead practice :

The neoclassic age, instead of yielding a harvest of mythological poems, is almost completely barren, at least of good ones.

This being the judgement on mythological elements, personification fares worse in the hands of Bush :

In keeping with the inflated Miltonese was the vogue of personified abstractions, which became notable about 1742 and which, as a cure for mythological measles, was worse than the disease.

Raschell Trickett, who seems to walk in the steps of Douglas Bush, says :

The allegorical interpretations of mythology which to the Renaissance made the gods and goddesses as real as the nature they represented, had been exchanged for a more rational appreciation of the appropriateness of the emblem to the attribute, or the single illustration of a clear and isolated philosophical view.

And of personified abstractions in Augustan poetry :

The abstractions of eighteenth century poetry are usually static and detached illustrations of the theme.

C. V. Dean's comment, along with the foregoing ones, settles, once for all, the fortune of eighteenth century poetry:

The personified abstractions employed by them (the eighteenth century poets) are apt to be stiff and rhetorical... Many of the figures have the appearance of being introduced more for decorative than instructive purposes.⁹

In the face of such established authorities, any defence of eighteenth century poetry seems doomed to failure from the very outset. Nor do we want to make any such ambitious claim in the present essay. Our effort is much humbler. We want to enquire if, in decrying the use of personification of abstract concepts, the critics have not forgotten or overlooked the very purpose of such personifications in poetry, and to see, after analysing a few passages as give us illustrations of such personifications, if this aspect of eighteenth century poetry does not give us a better insight into Augustan imagination.

The disfavour, peculiar to the modern critics of eighteenth century poetry, seems partially to have emanated from the more common eighteenth century attitude towards the use of myths and mythological elements in poetry. Basil Willey has shown that in an age dominated by the philosophy of Descartes and the mathematics of Newton poets could not confidently claim the seats of seers.¹⁰ Everything was fixed and what explanation anyone needed could be given by science. All that the ancients had worked out

to explain the mysteries of nature—that which we call myth—consequently suffered a loss of prestige in that age. Myths and mythologies could simply be repudiated as preposterous lies, or, if at all indulged in, could be indulged in as nursery-tales to lull an unscientifically-minded audience. Poets, making any application of the mythological elements, could do that only at the peril of weakening the very substance of their art.

So far as the neo-classical attitude to mythological elements in poetry is concerned, Basil Willey's presentation of the age is correct. But can we thereby think the conscious opinion was much heeded by the poets in their practice? True in essential as the picture is, it does not explain why eighteenth century poets, minor or major, not only integrated mythological elements in their works, but also, in absence of such mythological elements, created new images of personified concepts which, even in moments of exasperation, the critics cannot but look upon as the age's peculiar substitute for the mythological elements. That the vogue of such personifications not only began with the Elizabethans, but grew more and more to find its culmination in the Romantic poetry, is borne out by the several types of Augustan poems dealing with personified abstractions. Douglas Bush has classified such types and the number he has given is too big to be trifled away with. A large section of these poems lacks, as any widely prevalent practice does, sufficient intrinsic merit to demand the attentive reading of posterity. But within them, there are such remarkable pieces as Jonathan Swift's **Baucis and Philomen** for its satire, Richard Savage's **Polly** for its general portrait of chastity, and Alexander Pope's delicate personifications of abstract qualities which throng round the table of Belinda—Ill-omen, Sickness and the like. We cannot, to fit in with the total picture of the age given by the rationalistically-minded taste of the critics, too summarily dispense with the wide and rich practice of the poets.

It is a case of contradiction between critical theory and poetic practice, but the contradiction is not so suprising as at first sight it may appear to be. When Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists were carving out their new dramatic method in carefree disregard of the so-called Aristotelian rules and making happy unification of tragedy with comedy, Philip Sidney and their fellow-critics lamented over what they called 'gross absurdities' of the English stage.¹¹ But Sidney was not a dramatist and we may at best conjecture what course he would have taken had he made any venture at playwriting. This contradiction, present throughout history, becomes all the more amusing when it divides the conscious theorizing from the inspired practice of the poets and artists. The eighteenth century gives us a good many examples of this contradiction. In critical theory, it advocated a conscious adherence to the classical rules, but whenever poets and artists followed these rules they made poor creations indeed. Such is when Dryden or Pope makes dreary advocacy of the classical rules ; witness Pope's **Essay on Criticism**,

Dryden's heroic dramas. When, on the other hand, they give free rein to imagination and write in spite of their too respectful attitude to the rules, their works really glow with poetic fire. We do not miss that fire in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, even Johnson's English poems which David Nicol Smith has called the most *classical* part of his works.¹² If the dichotomy that separates the theory and practice of the neo-classical poets did not disturb them it is because in their attempt to formulate what they thought should be the proper practice poets and artists often felt obliged to relinquish what true inspiration they possessed. What did Pope note in Homer? It was the element of **fire**. Fire, again, is what W. P. Ker has observed to be the chief quality in Pope's poetry:

Fire is Pope's element; Pope returns to the 'fire of the poem' later in the same preface (to Homer); this is what he says of Chapman : 'that which is to be allowed him, and which very much contributed to cover his defects, is a daring fiery spirit that animates his translation, which is something like what arrived to years of discretion. Of course Pope believed that he himself possessed a daring fiery spirit; and that being so, his ideal of verse ought not to be an ideal of glaze and polish, 'fix'd as in a frost'.¹³

In literary and artistic taste, Dryden, Pope and their contemporaries were professed admirers of the classical age, but having the unique achievement of the Elizabethans at their back they could not happily do away with that heritage. Literature is a tradition, but the tradition is very often a record of contradictions and counteractions. In their eager pursuit of counteracting or 'correcting' the Elizabethans, Dryden, Pope and their contemporaries forgot that the unconscious literary heritage of a country is much more powerful than any deliberate theorizing. Consciously they were admirers of Raphael and the Florentine school of painting and criticised, sometimes too, the Dutch and the Flemish painters. But growing up in the tradition of Sir Godfrey Kneller and Sir Peter Lely and having such close acquaintance with the Whitehall paintings of Sir Peter Rubens and Anthony Vandyck, it was well-nigh impossible for Dryden, Pope and their contemporaries to keep themselves clean of the influence of the baroque painters. However much they might speak against 'the meaner and lower sort of art'¹⁴ the places of their works which more attach to our memory are where the features of Dutch and Flemish paintings are too palpable to escape notice, such as verbal portraits in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* characterised by what may be called baroque qualities of movement, fluctuation, and limitlessness or Pope's description of Belinda at her toilet, or the sporting scene in *The Dunciad*. 'Fool, look in thy heart and write!' Poets write best when they follow the dictates of their own hearts. The Augustans were very often handicapped by their own teaching; Shakespeare and his contemporaries were much more fortunate.

That this contradication in theory and practice hampers the total integration of an artist's personality was obvious to the greatest artist of the age. All along his tenure as the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds preached to his students the necessity of working in the Grand Style, a style which, in clear opposition to the opulent and colourful baroque, is characterised by a simplicity in execution, bold design and a guiding ambition for the sublime. Reynold's indefatigable championing of this style and a peculiar predisposition of the principal institution of the age gave birth to a few artists in Grand Style. But is it by the works of Flaxman or Benjamin West that the eighteenth century is known to us? Is it not much more famous for the almost elusive qualities of the portraits of Gainsborough, or the comical figures of Hogarth, so distinctly rococo in the use of the light and the delicate, or the portraits of the *Shrimp-girl*, almost impressionistic in its sweeping brushwork, or by the solid sculpturesque portraits by Sir Joshua himself where the most colourful application of chiaroscuro makes him a true exponent of the Rembrandtesque style in England? None of these is in the tradition of Grand Style and Sir Joshua himself was conscious of the contradiction. In his farewell address to the Royal Academy Reynolds confessed :

I have taken another course, one more suited to my abilities, and to the taste of the time in which I live. Yet, however unequal I feel myself to that attempt, were I to begin that work again, I would tread in the steps of that great master... to catch the slightest of his perfection would be glory enough for an ambitious man.¹⁵

The confession is evidence that artists often create what their conscious intellect does not permit. For us, it is a reminder that we need not attach too much importance to what the critics proclaimed at the expense of the real works of poets and artists.

What is more important for the eighteenth century is that this contradiction not only separated eighteenth century poetry from the neo-classical theory, but it marked the theory itself with a peculiar ambivalence. The *loci classici* of the age's opinion on the use of mythology in poetry are Johnson's comments on several authors, Addison's two articles in the *Spectator* (nos 315 & 369), and a few lines in *The Task* by Cowper. All the three critics disapprove of the use of mythology in poetry, ancient or modern, although the standpoint is not the same for them all. Johnson criticised from the point of view of reason while Addison's contention is pre-eminently for the truth of the Christian religion.¹⁶ Yet, all the three find room for the mythological in the mockheroic. This is particularly evident when they come to consider Pope's poetry. Johnson was usually critical of the use of mythology in poetry, yet he admired Pope's use of personified abstractions in *The Rape of the Lock*.¹⁷ Addison, who did not scruple to deplore Milton's use of heathen elements in a Christian epic said of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* :

I am always highly delighted with the discovery of any rising genius among my countrymen. For this reason I have read over, with great pleasure, the late miscellany published by Mr. Pope, in which there are many excellent compositions by that ingenious gentleman... I was particularly well-pleased to find that the author had not amused himself with fables onlt of the Pagan theology, and that when he hints at anything of that nature, he alludes to it only as fable... In mock-heroic poems, the use of heathen mythology is not only excusable, but graceful, because it is the design of such compositions to divert, by adapting the fabulous machines of the ancients to low subjects, and at the same time by ridiculing such kinds of machinery in modern writers.¹⁸

How can we explain this contradiction? Is it a spontaneous homage to the greatest poet of the age, or a reluctant relegating of the inheritance of the Renaissance to a minor field, an inheritance which the critics could not, or would not, with all their religious-philosophical tenets, disown? Our point is that the peculiar double-faced attraction of the age not only made criticism indecisive. Janus like, the poets turned one face to the rule of reason ushered in by the scientific and philosophical speculations of the age, the other face to the lesson the forefathers at their time of the Renaissance had taught them.

What is the lesson?

R. L. Brett has said¹⁹ that as habits and ways of thinking change from age to age we find the Renaissance habit of thinking in analogy giving place to the habit of reasoning in the Augustan age. We cannot properly understand the place of images in Renaissance poetry so long as we think that images are but the embellishments of a conceptual statement. For us, images only beautify and decorate truth; at best, they emphasize the truth arrived at through other modes of thinking. We cannot think that images discover any new truth. But for the Renaissance writer, images helped them to discover truth, to give, in the words of Puttenham, 'glorious lustre and illumination' to a statement.²⁰ Using a word from Aristotle, George Chapman said in the Preface to *Ovid's Banquet of Senses* :

That **energia**, or clearness of representation, required in a poem, is not the prespicuous delivery of a low invention; but high and harty invention exprest in most significant and unaffected phrase which though ignorants will esteem spic'd, will see it hath motion, spirit and life...²¹

The Elizabethans used the word 'clarte' for the quality Chapman speaks of in the foregoing lines. When Shakespeare compares pity to a 'naked new-born babe' in *Macbeth* I.vii,

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
 Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubin, hors'd
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
 That tears shall drown the wind.

he uses an appropriate image to highlight the unnaturalness of Macbeth's act. Such personification, by the compression and swiftness that the last phase of Shakespeare's stylistic development shows, is an example where idea and picture are fused together. It is a good example of 'clarte' where image helps to clarify idea. It is not studiously pictorial. But is it what can be said universally of Elizabethan poetry? The great storehouse of personification in Elizabethan poetry is Spenser's the *Faerie Queene*. But the pictorial qualities in the personifications do not always do justice to the concepts they stand for. Archimago, for example, stands for papacy. But how can we equate the features of Archimago, as given in the following lines, with the qualities of the Catholic church?

At length they chanst to meet upon the way
 An aged Sire, in longe blacke weeds yclad,
 His feete all bare, his beard all hoary grey,
 And by his belt his books he hanging had;
 Sober he seemde, and very sagely sad,
 And to the ground his eyes were lowly bent,
 Simple in show, and voyde of malice bad,
 And all the way he prayed, as he went,
 And often knockt his breast, as one that did repent.²²

This is a good portrait, but not an altogether convincing personification of a concept. In a like way, many of Spenser's portraits are something less or more than allegorical. Such personifications, however beautiful, cannot but appear conspicuously lacking in contextual relevance. The abundance of pictorial or sensual qualities seems to deflect from the very purpose of 'clarte.' And what we have said of Spenser can with equal propriety be said of a good deal of Elizabethan poetry. The poets seem to be luxuriating in verbal felicity and to forget the very purpose of 'clarte', of emphasizing the theme with the help of images. In Elizabethan poetry images seem to be delight in itself. If by pictorial quality in poetry we understand a poetic exuberance which is quite forgetful of its purpose, it may readily be admitted that much of eighteenth century poetry is free from such pictorial beauty. But of poetic skill which, is made subservient to the chief purpose of clarifying the theme, eighteenth century poetry supplies us with not a little illustration. Let us consider, for example, the poem *Solitude* by James Grainger (1721-1766). James Grainger is one of the poets C. V. Deane refers

to as coldly conceptual. But *Solitude* shows that he did not forget to enrich his poems whenever it was necessary to do so. Still, Bush and others are fundamentally correct when they say that with the neo-classic poets idea comes first, picture is secondary. But there is no need to reproach such a method; it is a method with poets who want to communicate something, and eighteenth century poets, as T. S. Eliot says, state something, sometimes immensely. Grainer's purpose in this poem is to describe solitude in such terms as do not draw our attention away from the real spirit of solitude :

When all Nature's hush'd asleep,
 Nor Love nor Guilt their vigils keep, .
 Soft you leave your cavern'd den,
 And wander o'er the works of men.
 But when Phosphor brings the dawn
 By her dappled coursers drawn,
 Again you to the wild retreat
 And the early huntsman meet,
 Where as you pensive pace along,
 You catch the distant Shepherd's song,
 Or brush from herbs the pearly dew,
 Or the rising Primrose view.
 Devotion lends her heaven-plum'd wings,
 You mount, and Nature with you sings.
 But when mid-day fervors glow
 To upland airy shades you go,
 Where never sunburnt woodman came,
 Nor sportsman chased the timid game;
 And there beneath an oak reclin'd,
 With drowsy waterfalls behind,
 Your sink to rest.
 Till the tuneful bird of night
 From the neighboring poplars height
 Wake you with her solemn strain,
 And teach pleas'd Echo to complain.

The statement is equally correct of many short pieces of eighteenth century poetry which are remarkable not for any superfluity of pictorial beauty, but for the economy with which the poets give us the essence of the concepts they attempt to describe. We give a few examples.

1. Independence

Thy spirit, Independence, let me share!
 Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye
 Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
 Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.
 Deep in the frozen regions of the north,
 A goddess violated brought thee forth,
 Immortal Liberty, whose looks subline
 Hath bleached the tyrant's cheek in every varying clime.

—Tobias George Smollet.

2. Memory

O Memory, thou fond deceiver,
 Still importunate and vain;
 To former joys recurring ever,
 And turning all the past to pain;
 Hence, intruder, most distressing,
 Seek the happy and the free :
 The wretch who wants each other blessing
 Ever wants a friend in thee.

—Oliver Goldsmith.

3. To Hope

Oh, ever skill'd to wear the form we love!
 To bid the shapes of fear and grief depart,
 Come, gentle Hope! with one gay smile remove
 The lasting sadness of an aching heart.
 Thy voice, benign enchantress! let me hear;
 Say that for me some pleasures yet shall bloom,
 That fancy's rediance, friendship's precious tear,
 Shall soften, or shall chase, misfortune's gloom.
 But come not glowing in the dazzling ray
 Which once with dear illusions charm'd my eye,
 Oh, strew no more, sweet flatterer! on my way
 The flowers I fondly thought too bright to die :
 Visions less fair will sooth my breast,
 That asks not happiness, but longs for rest.

—Helen Maria Williams.

The ideal balance between concept and picture is nowhere better illustrated than in the poetry of Alexander Pope. Pope was not only a great connoisseur of the arts, he was himself a keen student of painting. From his mother's side he was a grand-nephew of Samuel Cooper and in his childhood must have seen the great miniaturist at work. For a few years from 1713, Pope was a pupil of Charles Jervas, the portraitist, and to Joseph Spence's enquiry, 'Which, Sir, gives the most pleasure, poetry or painting?' Pope replied—I really cannot well say, both of them are so extremely pleasing.²³

Good illustration of Pope's pictorial skill are the mages of human passions, embodied in the images of sylphs and gnomes, who wait upon Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock*. Pictorially considered, the diminutive size and impish nature of the figures aptly represent the annoying nature of the passions they personify. Given below are the descriptions of Ill-nature and Affectation :

Two handmaids wait the throne : Alike in place
But diff'ring far in figure and in face.
Her wrinkled form in black and white array'd;
With store of prayers, for mornings, nights and noons,
Her hand is fill'd; her bosom with lampoons.
There Affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
Practis's to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
The fair-ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.

—Canto V, 25-38

Ever since Pope wrote in the dedicatory letter prefacing *The Rape* that "the Machinery...invented by the Critics, to signify that part which the Deities, Angel or Daemons are made to act in a Poem", the images have been considered from the point of the function they serve in the satire. That no doubt, should be the first object of criticism. But when, from correctly discerning that the sylphs and gnomes are the best illustrations of imagination as revealed in the eighteenth century poetry, David Fairer comes to the conclusion that they are the inhabitants of light and lack bodies,

Neither are the sylphs physical beings; they are all light and colour, and Pope goes out of his way to stress their disembodied character as 'Transparent Form, too fine for mortal sight.'²⁴

We cannot but think that he does not consider the body, or 'the imaginative solidity', as Wilson Knight puts it,²⁵ that Pope's imagination takes shape in. These figures are quite seriously imagined, and exquisitely realized, with names delicately composed to suit their peculiar charges.²⁶

The image of Ill-nature, for example, embodies all the qualities associated with Spleen, but each quality has been given a pictorial counter part which, when associated with the others, coajure up a flawless image of an ancient maid : 'Wrinkl'd form' for jealousy, 'prayer, with lampoons in bosom,' symbolising morbid desire for self-esteem and destruction of others. The Augustan poets were in favour of **correctness**, and not exuberance. The image of Ill-nature may be taken as an illustration that the rule of correctness did not necessarily mean for them a limitation or restriction. Nor is the idea of Pope as 'not preeminently a visual poet'²⁷ a wholly correct one.

For those who choose to believe that the eighteenth century poets could not excel in the beautiful, however powerful they might be in the satiric or the bitter, the other image, that of Affectation, may serve as a good corrective. The qualities that are generally associated with romantic sickness—rosy cheek, fainting disposition, languishment are here turned to the quite contrary purpose of building up a portrait which is, top to toe, satiric. The last two lines make quite clear how the sane-headed Augustans looked upon romantic sentimentalities :

The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.

These two figures are really 'differing far in figure and in face', though 'alike in place.' Joachim Winckelmann said that the 'three most noble qualities necessary for allegoric images are **simplicity, clarity and grace**. They must express the significance directly, there must be clear similarity between the image and the idea expressed, and the images must be graceful in accordance with the norms of art, which is to delight and to amuse.²⁸ Pope's personifications, as illustrated in the images of Ill-nature and Affectation, satisfy the norms set up by Winckelmann. The images, far beyond their function of the merely satiric, impress us by their pictorial vividness. We are naturally led to seek for any parallel of such figures in the world of contemporary painting. We must not forget, though, Wickelmann's warning that.

Art with its symbols is different from poetry and cannot execute satisfactorily the extreme beautiful images that the latter can.²⁹

Yet, the seventeenth century was the glorious age of allegorical painting in England. The Renaissance had not created a powerful school of decorative painting in England³⁰ and it was only when Charles I invited

Peter Paul Rubens to his court that a revival of allegorical painting was possible in England. The great baroque painter not only decorated the ceilings and walls of Whitehall or Hampton Court, but also set in a tradition of many able painters like Anthony Vandyck (Whitehall Palace), Antonio Verrio (Windsor Castle), Louis Laguerre (Chatsworth Palace), and Sir James Thornhill (Hampton Court). Being a keen admirer of art, it is very unlikely that Pope did not know their works by heart, rich and exuberant pictures of oval or rounded canvases in the corners linked with the central panel by friezes of **putti** with animals and fruits. It is especially the **putties** which bear a strong resemblance the images of concepts found in *The Rape of the Lock*. There is a strong likeness between the two in shortness of stature, flanking position and decorativeness of nature. We may reasonably think that it is one instance where Alexander Pope was much more influenced by the baroque tradition of painting than by the renaissance tradition.

If *The Rape of the Lock* displays a playful mood of the author, *The Dunciad* is poem where Pope's involvement as a person and as an artist has been highest. He could not be easy and frolicsome here anymore than Dryden could be in *Mac Flecknoe*. The style of the poem is therefore weighty, the pace heavy and the direction less full of scintillating brilliance than the *Rape*. But even here Pope will not fail to give proof of his pictorial talent, as in the portrait of Dulness, the presiding spirit of the poem. It is quite in the fitness of things that Pope should expatiate on her appearance and deportment at office :

All these, and more, the cloud-compelling Queen
Beholds thro' fogs, that magnify the scene.
She, tinsel'd o'er in robes of varying hues,
With Self-applause her wild creation views;
Sees momentary monsters rise and fall
And with her own fools-colors gilds them all.

But more remarkable is the rapid sequence of personifications of abstract qualities which attend upon Dulness, such as the four guardian Virtues supporting her throne :

In clouded Majesty here Dulness shone :
Four guardian virtues, round support her throne :
Fierce champion Fortitude, that knows no fears
Of hisses, blows, or want, or loss of ears :
Calm Temperance, whose blessings those partake
Who hunger, and who thirst for scribbling sake :
Prudence, whose glass presents the approaching jays;
Poetic Justice, with her lifter scale,
Where, in nice balance, truth with gold she weighs,
And solid pudding against empty praise.

(Book I, 45-55)

A succession of verbs or adjectives contributes animal or subhuman qualities to many abstract ideas, ethical concepts, or even literary features. Sometimes, such personifications, running for lines together, build up a picture of a chaos where all human or artistic values seem to be in jeopardy :

Here she beholds the Chaos dark and deep,
 Where nameless Something in their causes sleep
 'Till gentil Jacob, or a warm Third day,
 Call forth each mass, a Poem, or a Play :
 How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie,
 How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry,
 Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet,
 And learn to crawl upon the poetic feet.
 Here one poor word a hundred clenches makes,
 And ductile dulness new meanders takes;
 There motley Images her fancy strike,
 Figures all aspir'd, and Similiés unlike.
 She sees a Mob of Metaphors advance,
 Pleas'd with the madness of the mazy dance :
 How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;
 How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race;
 How Time himself stands at her command,
 Realms shift their place, and Ocean turns to land.

(Book I, 55-72)

In another respect, Pope's *Dunciad* bears a strong resemblance to baroque painting. Heinrich Wölfflin has said that the two outstanding features of baroque art are its representation of movement and grand design.³⁰ Leonardo da Vinci had said that he who would wish to excel in painting must learn to represent, along with the correctness of external limbs, the workings of the mind which can be shown by a movement of the limbs. Neither Leonardo nor any other Renaissance painter had succeeded in conveying the sense of movement in any painting. In baroque art, on the other hand, movement extends far beyond the limbs; it infuses the drapery and even encompasses the background, this transporting of movement or energy unifies all the several parts of the painting in a grand design. It is this **totality of imagination** which makes the works of the baroque painters characteristically different from the works of their Renaissance predecessors.

In one, it is the mathematical rule that constructed; in the other it is the sweeping imagination that unifies. Of what the work of such a powerful imagination can be when applied to a scene of action, we can have an idea

from *Le Kermese* by Peter Paul Rubens. It is a scene of Flemish revelry and many a person takes part in it. But it will be a vain effort to analyse the figures, or the still objects, or the greenness bit by bit, everything seems to be so much impelled by an energy radiating directly, as it were, from the western sky aglow with the spirit of joy. We cannot but be moved to wonder by the grandeur of conception and the boldness of execution which can unite such a plenty of detail in a grand orchestra.

We cannot, in a like way, but admire the poetic imagination that conceived *The Dunciad* with its large canvas, and the executing genius that harmonised all the materials in the structure of the poem. Dean Swift was right when he told Pope that 'twenty miles from London nobody would understand the hints and initials and in five years not even those who lived in London.' The wide variety of contemporary materials that make the constituent elements of the poem may appear tediously ephemeral for our enquiry. Nor is it necessary to be so. Rather we should look upon the poem as a work of art where pageantry after pageantry unfolds the poet's capacity of viewing men and events in an eternal drama of light and darkness. Such a pageantry, for example is Book II where there are given scenes of games and sports. The central figure there is Cloacina, the goddess of filth and dirt, another of Pope's personifications of abstract qualities :

A place there is, betwixt earth, air, and seas,
Where, from Ambrosia, Jove retires for ease.
There in his seat two spacious vents appear,
On this he seats, to that he leans his ears
And hears the various vows of fond mankind :
Some beg an eastern, some a western wind :
All vain petitions, mounting to the sky,
With reams abundant this abode supply;
Amus'd he reads, and then returns the bills
Sign'd with the Ichor which from Gods distills.
In Office here fair Cloacina stands,
And ministers to Jove with purest hands.
Forth from the heap she pick'd her Vot'ry's prayer,
And plac'd it next him, a distinction rare!
Oft had the Goddess heard her servant's call,
From her black Grottos near the Temple-wall,
List'ning delighted to the jest unclean
Of link-boys vile and waterman obscene;
Where, as he fish'd her nether realms for wit,
She oft had favour'd him and favours yet.

The participants who gather round Cloacina in this mock-tournament are as numerous as they are reckless and unrestrained. But we do not keep our eyes on each individual, but enjoy visualizing the game as a whole, just as we enjoy *Le Kermesse* as a total scene of revelry. Pope's imagination organises the multitudes of material in a unique scene of action. It changes all the drosses of society into objects of art; in his hands they undergo transmutation. As a result, the pictorial beauty of the scene engages our attention, and we scarcely enquire about the historical identity or the verisimilitude of the persons concerned. The justification of art is not that it constantly refers to the contemporary world, but that it creates a world in itself where all objects, however trivial or ugly phenomenally, turn to objects of beauty and admiration.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Raleigh, W. ed., **Johnson On Shakespeare**, Oxford, 1959, p.xviii.
2. Bush, Douglas, **Mythology and the Romantic Tradition**, Camb, Mass., 1969, p.4
3. Wordsworth, **Poetry and Prose**, ed., D. N. Smith., Oxford, 1960, p.167.
4. Bush, **op.cit**, p. 5
5. **Ibid**, p. 25
6. **Ibid**, p. 21
7. Trickett, Raschell, 'The Augustan Pantheon', **Essays and Studies**, London, 1953.
8. **Ibid**, p. 74
9. Deane, C. V., **Aspects of Eighteenth Century Nature Poetry**, London, 1967, p. 81.
10. Willey, B., **The Seventeenth Century Background**, Harmondsworth, 1967, p. 185 : 'In the seventeenth century the boundaries between 'truth' and 'fiction' were being laid down with unexampled energy, rapidity and precision. I have already suggested that during the period of such a systematic effort to displace older world order by philosophical conceptions, the position of poetry was likely to be precarious.'

And again on p. 189 : 'It is nowhere suggested, either by Bacon or by Reynolds that poetry should still be used, in the manner of antiquity, for conveying profound intuitions and glimpses of truth. On the contrary, it is everywhere implied that though poetry may have been the 'mental rattle that awakened the attention of intellect in the infancy of civil society', its usefulness is now exhausted.'

11. Sidney, P. **Apologie for Poetrie**, ed., E. Churton Collins, Oxford, 1961, p. 51.
12. Smith, D. N., 'Johnson's English Poems,' in **From Sensibility to Romanticism**, ed., F. W. Hilles, N. Y., 1965, p. 72.
13. Ker, W. P., 'Pope', **English Critical Essays, XX cent**, first series, ed., P. M. Jones, Oxford, 1959, p. 114.
14. Dryden, J., **Essay on Dramatic Poesy and other Critical Essays** Vol. II, ed, G. Watson., London, 1962, p.169.
15. Reynolds, J., **Discourses**, ed., R. Wark, San Marino, 1959, p. 117
16. Addison, J., **Works**, ed., R. Hurd, London, 1912, Vol. III, p. 323.
17. Boswell, J. **Life of Johnson**, ed., R. W. Chapman., Oxford, 1976, p. 1076, & **Critical Opinions of Samuel Johnson**, ed., J. E. Brown, Princeton, 1923, p. 154.
18. Addison, **op.cit.** vol. II, p. 46.
19. Brett, R. L., **Reason and Imagination**, Oxford, 1969, p. 4
20. Smith, G., **Sixteenth Century Critical Essays**, Vol. I, p. 48
21. Tuve, R., **Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery**, Chicago, 1947, p. 27.
22. **The Faerie Queene**, Book I.
23. Spence, J. **Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men**, ed, Osborn, Oxford, 1966, p. 46.
24. Fairer, D. 'Imagination in The Rape of the Lock', **Essays in Criticism**, Vol XXIX, January 1966, p. 46.
25. Knight, G. W. **The Laureate of Peace**, London, 1954, p. 26.
26. **Ibid**, p. 25.
27. The idea is Wilson Knight's **ibid**, p. 23.
28. Winckelmann, J., **Writings on Art**, tr., D. Irwin, London, 1978, 145.
29. **Ibid**, 146.
30. Whinney, M., Miller, O., **English Art 1625-1714**, Oxford, 1957, 285.
31. Woelfflin, H., **Renaissance and Baroque**, London 1974, 33.
32. Blunt, A., **Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600**. London, 1975, 26.
33. Swift, quoted by J. Sutherland, Introduction to **the Dunciad**, Twickenham edn., London, 1967.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Bhupendranath Seal is a Guest Lecturer in the Department of English, Calcutta University.

Ramkrishna Bhattacharya is a Reader in English, Anandamohan College, Calcutta, and Guest Lecturer in the Department of English, Calcutta University.

Sanjukta Dasgupta is a Reader in the Department of English, Calcutta University.

Jayati Gupta is a Selection Grade Lecturer in the Department of English, Presidency College, Calcutta.

Nandana Dutta is a Lecturer in the Department of English, Gauhati University.

Goutam Sengupta is a Selection Grade Lecturer in the Department of English, Gurudas College, Calcutta.

Aparna Khastgir has completed a Ph.D. in English from King's College, University of London.

R.N. 30080/75

Registered with the Registrar of Newspaper of India

This number edited by

KRISHNA SEN
AMITABHA SINHA

Editor-in-Chief

KRISHNA SEN

Published by

DR. TAPAN KUMAR MUKHERJEE
on behalf of the University of Calcutta
at Asutosh Building, Calcutta - 700 073

Printed by

Sri Pradip Kumar Ghosh
Superintendent, Calcutta University Press
48 Hazra Road, Calcutta - 700 019

Price : Rs. 25.00

Copies are sold at the Calcutta University Publications Sales Counter,
Asutosh Building, Calcutta - 700 073.

Vol. XXVI

No. 1

1998-99

***JOURNAL
OF
THE DEPARTMENT
OF
ENGLISH***



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

Advisory Board

Bhabatosh Chatterjee, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.
Ramendra Kumar Sen, M.A., D.Litt.

Board of Editors

Krishna Sen, M.A. (Cal. et Kent), Ph.D.
(*Head of the Department of English*)

Dipendu Chakraborty, M.A.
Surabhi Banerjee, M.A. (Cal. et Leeds), Ph.D.
Debnarayan Banerjee, M.A., Ph.D.
Aninda Basu Ray, M.A., M.Phil.
Chidananda Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D.
Debiprasad Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D.
Ramkrishna Bhattacharyya, M.A., Ph.D.
Kaberi Chatterjee, M.A., M.Phil.
Nandini Das, M.A., Ph.D.
Sanjukta Dasgupta, M.A., Ph.D.
Tapati Gupta, M.A., Ph.D.
Sudeshna Khasnobis, M.A. (Cantab.), Ph.D.
Santanu Majumdar, M.A., Ph.D.
Tirthaprasad Mukherjee, M.A.
Srobona Munshi, M.A., M.Litt. (Oxon.)
Mallika Ghosh Sarbadhikari, M.A.
Mangala Gouri Chakraborty, M.A.
Sona Roy, M.A., Ph.D.
Jharna Sanyal, M.A., Ph.D.
Bhupendranath Seal, M.A., Ph.D.
Kajal Sengupta, M.A. (Cal. et Oxon.)
Subhadra Kumar Sen, M.A., Ph.D.
Amitabha Sinha, M.A., Ph.D.
Secretary, U.C.A.C.